

THE PAINTINGS OF THE THREE TAGORES

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CHRONOLOGY AND COMPARATIVE STUDY

DR. RATAN PARIMDO



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**CHRONOLOGY AND COMPARATIVE STUDY**

**DR. RATAN PARIMOO**  
Head, Deptt. of Art History



**MAHARAJA SAYAJIRAO UNIVERSITY OF BARODA**



Indira Gandhi National  
Centre for the Arts

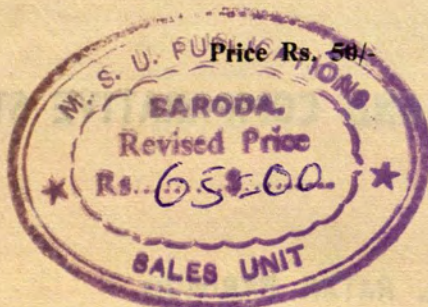


*To all those who wished and helped to see the book come through*



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## PREFACE

In a moment of self-justification for turning away from terrorist politics to literature, Fyodor Dostoevsky once said 'Beauty can save the world'. The beauty he embodied in his writings was sometimes in terror, sometimes in the revelations of a guilty conscience and often in the confrontations of good and bad human beings. There was a brutal freshness about his obsession with the human situation. Always he was concrete in dealing with emotions, moods and ideas as they occurred in life. In this way, he saved himself from the censure of critics about the use of the big word 'Beauty', in the phrase quoted above. And he bypassed Plato's ideal of Transcendence, God, Perfection, to see tenderness in human feelings.

In our country, Beauty was always subservient to God and Truth and the dictates of Dharma, right until the end of the 19th century (and even in our own day). About that time, however, some members of the Tagore household began to live as aesthetes in the western sense of that word, indulging in the arts of poetry, music, drama, painting and sculpture. They did not assert that they were in love with 'Beauty', but all their creative work shows that, in their own different ways, they had walked away from the God of the Vedanta to worship at some secret shrine in their own hearts.

I encouraged Ratan Parimoo to go into the background of the lives of the three Tagores, Abanindranath, Gaganendranath, and Rabindranath, who, apart from their other achievements, became important painters. And, in a few places, in the detailed analysis he has done, as a conscientious scholar, the fires that raged in the souls of these three artists shine through.

Curiously, Abanindranath Tagore, who was the most accomplished craftsman of his time, the purest aesthete, became addicted to the concept of a 'glorious National Art' for India and headed the revival of classical forms of Ajanta and mediaeval miniature, Mughal Paintings, only reverting to his own genius in the kattum kuttum toys of his old age.

Gaganendranath Tagore avoided all pomposity, vainglory and manifestos, in the whimsical, wayward and genuine inspirations from his many-sided talent; and thus he became the first experimentalist in painting of contemporary India.

Rabindranath Tagore, the poet of 'Harmony,' who had helped the revivalists, and even patronised them, along with E. B. Havell and Ananda Coomaraswamy, was later to turn to painting from the sheer love of creativeness. And he brought to view a whole world of colours and forms and lines, suggestive of miscellaneous human impulses, insights and insights. These paintings were, in fact, so humble, sincere and integral in their fantasies,





nightmares and dreams, that few people could believe that the poet of Harmony could descend to the rhythms of the tender human heart, in unconventional forms, which looked bizarre, awkward and even jerky—but have a peculiar charm of their own.

Ratan Parimoo has referred to the old poet's words about the grandiose, exalted and noble imitations of the classical art. 'These are like masks,' Rabindranath said, 'with exaggerated grimaces. They fail to respond to the ever-changing play of life.' And the poet had asked 'where are the master builders? Where is that longing, that imagination, the power of sacrifice?' among our people.

I hope that the readers of this book will be prompted to answer the challenging questions of Rabindranath Tagore, not only in words but in action.

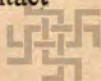
DR. MULK RAJ ANAND





## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The topic of this study was initially suggested by Dr. Mulk Raj Anand who was instrumental in paving the way for doctoral research in the Faculty of Fine Arts for which I feel grateful to him. I have received much encouragement from Prof. N. S. Bendre (retired as Dean in 1966) and also from subsequent Deans, Prof. S. Chaudhary (1966-68) and Prof. K. G. Subramanyam (since 1968) with whom I have had the benefit of several fruitful discussions. I had myself been contemplating a study of the developments in Indian painting during the present century while studying History of Art at London University (1960-63), exploratory work on which was carried out during 1964-65 while recipient of a U.G.C. grant. My wife, Naina, had at one stage finally convinced me of the qualities of Rabindranath's work thus removing my scepticism once for all. An invitation to participate in the seminar on "Indian Aesthetics and Art Activity" arranged by the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Simla, 1966, gave me the opportunity to read out parts of the material contained in Chapter IV, "Aesthetic Ideas and Controversies", which won for me the fortunate attention of Dr. Niharranjan Ray, whose approval of my line of approach served as a great booster. His advice at several occasions has been very helpful. Also most helpful had been the sessions I had with Shri Binode Bihari Mukherji whose warmth, clarity of thought and discerning opinion of Gaganendranath's paintings came as a pleasant surprise. He also tipped me about Shri Dwarik Chatterji (Calcutta), son of Gaganendranath's daughter, whose geniality reminded one of the deceased painter, and who gave useful biographical information. It was Pranab Ray who got me in touch with him who also led me to Shri Pulin Sen on a search for Gaganendranath's personal letters but the latter could neither confirm nor reject their existence or relevance. Soumyendranath Tagore could not show whatever he might have owned of Gaganendranath but gave permission to get myself lost in the office of the Indian Society of Oriental Art. A letter to Shri O. C. Ganguly elicited a demand for Rs. 300/- as fee. A chance meeting with Madame Vailhen at Santiniketan was fortunate who gave the initial suggestion of how the naturalistic and Japanese type of brush work could be separated in the work of Gaganendranath. Stimulating discussions with Sachin Ganguly and his friends in Santiniketan, Nripen Bannerji and Pabitra Ray, were helpful in many ways. Mr. G. Kunz of the W. German Consulate, Bombay, very enthusiastically undertook to contact the Bauhaus Archive, Darmstadt, and obtained information for me contained in Appendix II (B). That the old files of Modern Review would turn out to be a mine of information with regard to the subject of my study I realised for the first time when they were made available to me by Shri Ramanlal Dalal from his personal library. As I look back my thoughts go over to the lectures of Prof. Markand Bhatt (Dean from 1950 to 1959) and Prof. V. R. Amberker which were my first contact with the world of Art History and Criticism.





For their kind permission to see and photograph paintings of the three Tagores in their respective collections I am grateful to the Vice-Chancellor of Vishwabharati, Secretary of Rabindra Bharati Society, Calcutta, Shri Subha Mukherji (for Uma Devi collection, Calcutta) and Ranu Mukherji of Academy of Fine Arts, also in Calcutta, Shri Rai Krishna Das and Dr. Anand Krishna of Bharat Kala Bhawan, Banaras, Director, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi and Shri Shrenikbhai (for Kasturbhai Lalbhai collection, Ahmedabad). Soumyen Adhikari of Rabindra Sadan, Santiniketan and Samir and Devabrata Basu of Rabindra Bharati Society, Calcutta, took great pains in personally placing before me paintings for study as well as helping me in taking photographs. Shri Feroz Katpitia occasionally helped with copying. The following patiently worked for satisfying my seemingly unending demand for more than 2000 prints required for 5 sets of illustrations while submitting the present study in the form of doctoral dissertation: Ramchandra, Popatlal and Hakim & Sons. The following students helped in various ways: Indira Amin, Madhu Bazaz, Ram Chhatpar and Deepak Simkhada.

I feel deeply indebted to my referees Dr. Niharranjan Ray and Dr. Mulk Raj Anand, for their strong recommendation for its publication. I am especially grateful to the University Grants Commission for having given the financial assistance to cover the cost of printing of this book. I should also like to thank Shri Bachubhai Rawat of Kumar Karya-laya, Ahmedabad, for the special care taken in preparing the blocks; Shri B. M. Shah, Manager of the University Press, for patiently looking after the printing; and lastly Swati Mazumdar, who helped at the crucial stage of preparing the manuscript and the illustrations for final printing.

Faculty of Fine Arts, Baroda  
December, 1973

RATAN PARIMOO





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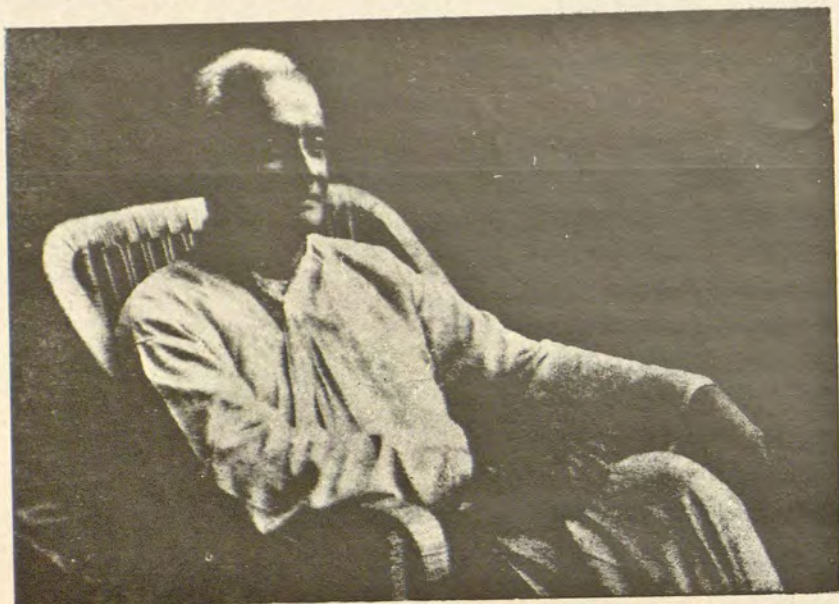


Fig. 2

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Fig. 6

Fig. 8



Fig. 7





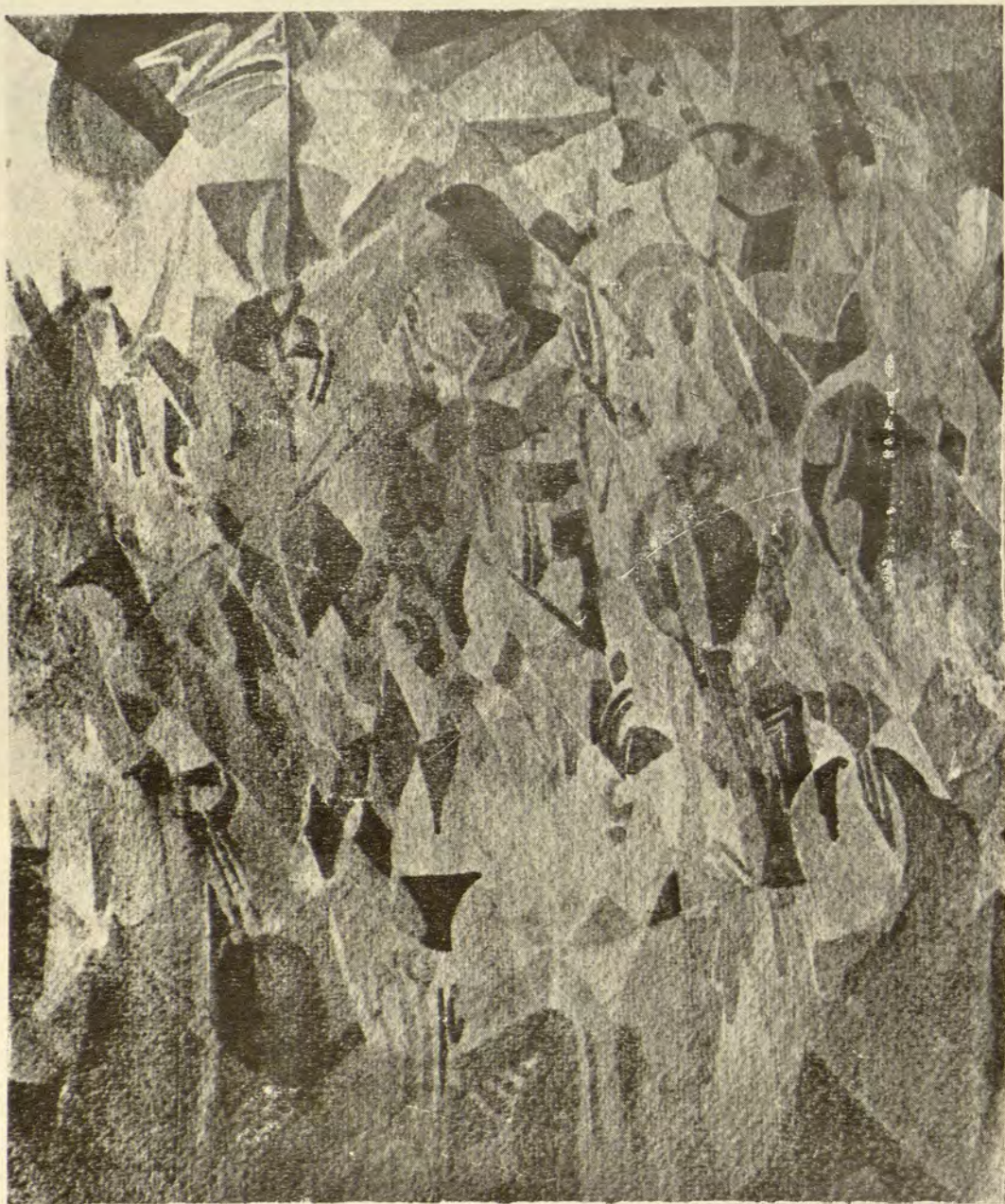
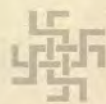


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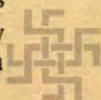
## INTRODUCTION

### **The break in the tradition and the rise of Individualism in modern Indian painting**

Indian painting in the 20th century is marked by a distinct change and contrast in comparison with the traditional forms practised for many centuries in the past. For over fifteen hundred years a continuous, consistent and ever enriching tradition in painting had existed persistently, partial remains of which are traceable in the present day folk art. The change is to be considered more as a break rather than that of the evolutionary kind. Not only do we notice great divergences in terms of style and technique between the painting produced now and those of the Mughal or Rajput periods (for example) but even individual artists differ greatly one from the other. Indeed, the rise of individualism itself and the diversity of styles are the distinct features of the change. Also is noticeable a marked discontinuity in the themes and the content owing to the shift in the values and the motivations. And finally, the old type of patron and artist relationship does not prevail any more today. In its place a new pattern of art economics is in the process of emerging.

These changes and deviations have bewildered many observers, some have vehemently denigrated them, some consider the new developments as a transplantation of an alien art form on our soil, the genuineness of which being, therefore, open to doubt. But the present art situation is a complex phenomenon and no rational comprehension of it is possible by taking sides, though a sympathetic attitude is certainly desirable while approaching it. In this context then it will be more logical to ask how the situation has come about, tracing the causes, the nature and the course of this transformation.

The first and predominant factor to be taken into consideration is that sociologically and culturally twentieth century India is not the same as ancient India or India of the 19th century for that matter. The British period of our history has made all the difference when the long isolation of the country was broken up paving way for contact with the west. Of course, it is true that the contact was not voluntary nor a two way traffic. (It would have perhaps made a difference if it were so). However, the contact with the west—ideological, cultural and economic—has had far-reaching consequences, beneficial as well as disastrous. The continuous flow of tradition has been interrupted. The confrontation of the traditional society and its established set of values with the values thrown up by the modern technological age has resulted in many conflicts and problems. This confrontation has demanded adjustments at many levels. This very process of adjustments has given rise to what has been described as “cultural confusion.”<sup>1</sup>





It is this point which is particularly relevant to the present study. Emergence of a new class of educated "modern" = "westernized" Indians who are at the same time alienated from the India of the masses, the prevailing India. The psyche of the modern Indian painter is also, likewise, conditioned and shaped by this general confusion affecting also his creative ventures.

This perfunctory digression in this preamble into the field of sociology was made with the purpose of making the point that when the factors, which make up the social milieu, change, inevitably the whole society also undergoes a metamorphoses. Even in the arts which are closely linked with the social set up, the change too is inevitable.

### **The need for scholarly appraisal of recent art activity**

Considerable work has been done by social scientists on these problems of interaction from their respective angles and research in these fields has become part of the University curriculum.<sup>2</sup> Yet it has to be noted that correspondingly hardly any systematic scholarly studies exist on the art of the present century in the form of factual data and critical commentaries on individuals or whole generations using the now well established and formulated modern art historical methodologies. Our scholars have been concentrating on ancient and medieval art and only recently have turned to what has survived of this tradition in the folk arts. The reason why scholars have fought shy of carrying out systematic research on the recent art activity is probably the feeling that the modern methodologies are not applicable to its study or that it is not worthy of the interest of serious scholarship.<sup>3</sup> It is the conviction of the present writer that it need not be so. Thus the present study has been taken up with a dual purpose (i) to attempt applying modern art historical methodologies to the study of a phase of the art of this century, (ii) collecting factual information of various kinds, sifting and analysing it with a view to work out the genesis of the modern movement in Indian Art.

At the fountain head of the modern movement in Indian art, stand the three Tagores—Abanindranath, Gaganendranath and Rabindranath—manifesting three distinct bends of mind, tendencies and attitudes, which continue to condition the contemporary Indian painting. That is the reason why these three artists have been selected for a detailed study. This study is primarily concerned with their paintings. It is only indirectly concerned with their times and their lives while a detailed discussion of their literary and philosophic preoccupations is outside the scope of this study. But that does not mean that these have no bearing on their paintings. References to both their writings and biographies will be made but only wherever necessary, wherever such information throws a special light on their paintings.<sup>4</sup>

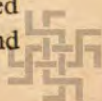
### **Scope of the present study**

For the purpose of a study of this kind which I consider to be properly speaking an art historical study, one has to confine to certain limits and the scope has to be defined. By art history I do not mean simply a documentation of facts put in a sequence entirely



without judgement, without any comments on the works of art themselves. That would be empty erudition as Venturi<sup>5</sup> has pointed out. Indeed I agree with him when he says that there is an identity in the two disciplines—Art history and art criticism—and that the two should coalesce. In view of this I have limited myself to the study of the paintings themselves, whatever information they yield regarding influences, sources and the evolution of the painter's style, so that broad chronological phases can be worked out, which would then enable us to characterize the total oeuvre of each of them. This will be further reinforced by a detailed analyses of carefully selected paintings representing key points in the artistic development of each painter. Using the comparative method<sup>6</sup> i.e. by comparing them with each other and with other artists, studying them in the world context so to speak, certain sets of characteristics and predilections could more convincingly be associated with each of these painters. The information and the conclusions yielded by the individual and comparative analysis of the pictures and the study of the artistic development of each painter will make it possible to bring out the distinct personality of each of them. For I believe, it is this artistic personality which counts ultimately.<sup>7</sup> To substantiate this, attempt will be made to probe into the artist's intention by what the paintings themselves tell and not all the time depending on the painter's own written statement. Parrying the written statement and the paintings—i.e. taking paintings as visual translations of philosophical statements can be very tenuous and lead to ludicrous results.<sup>8</sup> Whenever useful and relevant the statements have been made use of in this study e.g. Rabindranath's emphasis on individual emotions and the volitional aspects of the creative urge. Recourse will also be taken to the methods of analytical psychology with a view to penetrate into the depths of the artist's mind and suggest possible interpretations of the imageries evolved by each.<sup>9</sup> Finally, all the above mentioned trails of investigation will enable one to place each painter in his own generation and time, and facilitate evaluation of his contribution, his successes and limitations.

Side by side, I have looked for what may be called documents, for instance, exhibition catalogues, newspaper reviews of the time, or other sources where a particular painting is referred to, specifically placing the paintings in the time sequence leading to a firmer chronology.<sup>10</sup> Unfortunately not all such material has been preserved nor is it easily accessible to the research worker. Yet, it must be observed that not much use has been made of them by earlier writers. Indeed, I believe, that a study has not been conducted on these painters before on the lines attempted here. Many scholars have done considerable writing on the cultural situation of the time, on the western impact and the resistance and the revolt against it in the wake of growing nationalism, on the reform movement in Bengal, etc.<sup>11</sup> The fact that much information is available on these topics is the reason for my keeping this aspect to the necessary minimum, treating it only by way of a background—establishing connections between nationalism in politics and art wherever it appeared to me appropriate. However, after such a study as intended here and the conclusions arrived there of, I do believe there is a possibility of trying to go back to the general cultural and





socio-political milieu and work out a total picture of the time. But that is beyond the scope of this work.

### **Abanindranath and the misunderstood revivalism**

During the course of this study I have found that much of the early assumptions need to be revised. Revivalism (in its restricted connotation) and its leader Abanindranath, have been given excessive and disproportionate importance. It will be seen that he was not the originator of the idea though he was the first to work it out in his paintings. His genius lies in his attempts at a synthesis of several styles (mostly of Oriental origin). He was thus an eclectic with rather limited originality, though in the Indian context the first to evolve an individual style. His work has been classed as modern Indian and therefore, he has been given the title of the father of modern Indian art<sup>12</sup>—that is a genuine modern Indian art inspired by oriental tradition in contradistinction to modern Indian art of the recent decades which is supposedly inspired by the western modern art.

Curiously enough, for a long time modern Indian art continued to mean the painting of Abanindranath and his followers—"Aban Panthis".<sup>13</sup> Probably aware of the fact that revivalism is taken in a derogatory sense today and inspired by the urge to defend Abanindranath, a painter-critic, B. B. Mukherji, has claimed that the former was not a revivalist.<sup>14</sup> But I think this term need not be treated with the disrespect that it has earned in recent years. Abanindranath was too much part of the emotional climate of the time so that no other label fits him. I shall try to show that he combined in him certain 19th century features of European art like 'historicism' and 'Impressionism'. His work is also akin to and partially influenced by Art Nouveau (fin de siècle) taste. It will also be seen that actually modern Indian art grew out of all that happened in the early decades of this century. Its genesis was laid here, since we know from writings of the time, that both the painters and the critics, were all the while talking about and deeply concerned with the "Future of Indian Art".<sup>15</sup>

In spite of the often referred to "narrow nationalism"<sup>16</sup> of the time it will be seen that it opened up our eyes to arts outside India. If Ravivarman was influenced by a style imported by others from outside—now onwards it is the Indian artist who is himself choosing the influence selected from a much wider choice—both European and Oriental. Revivalism may appear to be an insulatory and isolationist attitude where as in actual practice what emerged out of it as seen in the paintings themselves, was in fact a "synthesis" of East and West. This is a crucial development in the 20th century Indian art—India coming to know the arts of different countries, wider set of sources being available to the artist and as a result of it a gradual growth of "internationalism" as will be seen in the works of Gaganendranath and Rabindranath. Of course in their creative work too "Synthesis" is involved.





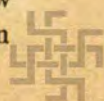
## Gaganendranath—more than a dilettente

Gaganendranath's sources are very wide indeed—Japanese ink style on one hand and cubism on the other and he had a masterly genius for synthesis. But hardly any systematic study of his paintings exists. No attention has been paid to his chronological phases and no one has discussed his style as it evolved through them. Critics have talked in terms of "types" of his work without relating one with the other.<sup>17</sup> Consequently they have been unable to evaluate his contribution and place him in the mainstream of 20th Century Indian art. It is not surprising then that even a discerning critic like Archer, completely disregards him. It will be shown that he was the first revolutionary painter in India. He can rightly be claimed as the main protagonist and the central character in this thesis. After a brief flirtation with the art-nouveau like linear style of his brother he turned from the conscious pre-occupation with "oriental style" into an introvert concerned with his own inner world. He experimented in adapting cubist elements to more expressively construct his dream fantasies, thus paving the way for Rabindranath and serving as a bridge between the latter and Abanindranath. Perhaps the chief value of this study will be whatever information I have been able to collect on Gaganendranath's creative output and the comments offered on them by me.

## The "modern" sources of Rabindranath

For much is also known about the paintings of Rabindranath, though again in his case the sources of his style have not been worked out nor even the phases through which his works traverse. His paintings again are comparable to many diverse art forms—like child art and German expressionism—for their naivety. Also probably he was influenced by "Primitive" art, especially pre-columbian and African sculpture. These happen to be those newly discovered arts for which there had been great enthusiasm (roopollasa)<sup>18</sup> in the west as a result of the new art movements coupled with the revolution in taste that were taking place in Europe. Rabindranath's response to these, represents another step toward growing internationalism in India. The predominantly unpremeditated character of his paintings aligns him with much of the modern art of the time.

Among other corollaries that have come up in this study are the phenomena of influences seen in new relationships. By now the Indian artist has discovered his tradition, is acquainted with Oriental art, has become aware that outside the sphere of European art there exist other kinds of art styles and traditions too, and that even in Europe itself realism had been rejected giving way to new revolutionary styles away from it. Out of such awarenesses an entirely new situation emerged for the Indian painter—which can simply be put as the confrontation with the modern west with all its new manifestations and aesthetic canons. This made it irrelevant to talk in terms of the so-called fundamental differences and polarity between western realism and Indian symbolism,<sup>19</sup> for the new art in the west was no more realistic. How this situation came about, will also emerge in the course of the present study.





## Outline of Chapters

The book begins with the background chapters, one giving some idea of the Hindu Revival and reform movements which took place along with political activities in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, tracing parallels and extensions of it as found in the art thinking of the time. This chapter will also have a section on the state of art in nineteenth century India and a short account of art education of the time as introduced by the British administration. A short section will be devoted to the Tagore family and to individual biographic sketches of the three painters, including their activities.

The other background chapter will concentrate on the ideological conflicts and the aesthetic discussion and polemics that had been going on while the three painters were engaged in their creative ventures. It is against this chapter that the works of the three painters have to be analysed. A chapter on each of the three will follow in order of their active periods beginning with Abanindranath, who matured around 1900 and continued to paint till about 1940, followed by Gaganendranath, who was active from 1910 to 1930 and lastly Rabindranath whose working period as painter falls between 1924 and 1940. Their working periods thus fall in the 20th century although they were born in the previous century and each had been already in his late 30s as the new century ushered in. In the concluding chapter their works will be compared with each other and their relative importance evaluated. In this chapter will also be reviewed and examined judgements and interpretations of various critics on the paintings of the three artists in the light of my own investigations.





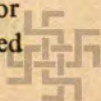
## NINETEENTH CENTURY INDIA, BACKGROUND AND MILIEU

### SECTION I

#### *Western Impact in Political and Social Spheres, Its Channels and Manifestations*

##### **British domination of India**

After the suppression of Indian Mutiny of 1857 and with the subsequent proclamation of Queen Victoria as the Empress the British domination of India was almost complete. Though the British connection with India began in 1600 A.D. with the establishment of the East India Company, it was not until the 2nd half of the 18th century that the Company began to develop as a territorial and political entity in India. Until then the impact of the British on India was only through commercial channels and did not amount to much. In the period that followed the complexion of things changed radically. Not only did British become rulers of India but the Industrial Revolution in England also took place during the same period. Therefore the impact of British rule as such and the impact of the Industrial Revolution cannot be separated. They merge indistinguishably into one another forming the whole complex of British or Western impact. Especially after 1858 the spirit of the whole set up changed and the pace of change in all fields accelerated. The period of exploitation of India's resources with new techniques began. Goetz has analyzed in detail the slow death and decay of the culture of the exhausted country as the British went on gaining control over larger and larger tracts of the country after the first foot-hold they established in Bengal. He divides the British Indian rulers into three sets. First those who started, almost involuntarily, on the conquest of India; to them their role as vassals of the grand Mughal came very naturally. The second consciously envisaged transformation of India into a colony. They belonged to the new upper class of England and smugly prided themselves to be the champions of progress and Christianity, by means of conquest, industrialization and missionary conversion, accepting the destruction of the 'backward' older forms of life as an unavoidable temporary evil on the road to the Golden Age to come. The third set of the British rulers were the cautious politicians of post-'Mutiny' times. They still believed in the victory of Western civilization, but by means of a slow transformation of Indian life and institutions. In their time the ancient Indian monuments were rediscovered, Rajput-Mughal architecture revived and adopted to some extent and the dying crafts were boosted by establishing art school and museums—without success. For at the same time railways penetrated the country and the imports of European goods ruined





the old crafts in a grand style. But the British were hardly aware of this contradiction, because it was an integral part also of their own life.

### **British Administration**

The essential basis of British system of Government, was civil and not military. The British administration concerned itself with the restoration of law and order, organizing efficient army and police force, establishing of judiciary, systematic collection of land revenue, legalizing of ownership, introduction of standard monetary system and so on. The British administration can be characterised as a machine, as impersonal, which did not fundamentally change character with changes in secretaries of state or viceroys. While it had a quality of endurance it produced a lack of sensitiveness in the administrators to the feelings and desires of the people. It was more thorough and interfering than any previous administration and thus pressed heavily on the people. It was continuously expanding the scope of its activities and assuming new functions, many of which in earlier times would have been left to the people.

### **Communication**

#### ***Railways and Roads***

Development of modern means of transportation and communications both within the country and with outside world had far-reaching consequences. In 1845 first experimental railway was constructed and in 1853 first railway line between Bombay and Thana was opened to traffic. By 1869, 5015 miles of railways had been laid. The planning of the railways lines in India, however, was not based on a plan of tapping the commercial centres or districts so as to make their working profitable but on strategic and military considerations. The same was the case with the construction of metalled and bridged trunk roads which was carried out under the supervision of the Military Board. With the establishment of the Public Works Department, under Lord Dalhousie, the progress of road building was rapid. Railways needed feeder roads, and their construction gave added stimulus to road building. In 1880 about 20,000 miles of surfaced roads were constructed and by 1914 there were 50,000 approximately.

#### ***Telegraph and Telephone***

Postal department had started functioning quite early in 19th century. Although telegraph system was first introduced in 1817, between Calcutta and Nagpur, the first telegraph line on cross country level was opened in 1852. In 1914/15, there were 84,124 miles of telegraph lines in British India. The first overland telegraph between Europe and India via Constantinople was established in 1865. The direct sea-cable between Bombay and England was successfully laid in 1870 and was taken further to Singapore and Australia.

Telephone exchanges in the big cities of Bombay, Calcutta, Madras and Karachi were opened in 1881/82. In 1938/39 there were 1,53,710 miles of telephone wire and cables in British India while the total telephones connected numbered 31,091.





## Navigation

Steam navigation began in 1828 on the Ganges. Steamers were introduced into the external over seas communication to and from India after 1825. The opening of the Suez canal in 1869 was an important factor in the growth of overseas transport, which increased enormously. By 1901, over nine million tons of shipping entered into and were cleared from Indian ports annually. Almost the whole of India's foreign trade and an overwhelming part of her coastal trade was carried in British ships.

## Industry

The first Indian Cotton Textile Mill was started in 1854 in Bombay. By 1879, there were 56 mills with 14,53,000 spindles, 13,000 looms employing 43,000 persons, three-fourths of which were in the Bombay Presidency and nearly half in Bombay Island. The cotton mills produced mostly yarn, a large part of which was exported. By the 1890s, however, the market for Indian yarn started to contract. As a result, the Indian cotton industry turned homewards and began to cater mainly for the internal cloth market by increasing its weaving sections and also by going in for fine cloth. The Swadeshi movement of that period helped this transformation to a considerable degree. In 1913/14, there were 264 mills with 66,20,576 spindles, 96,688 looms employing 2,60,847 persons.

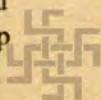
The first jute mill in India was established by Mr. Auckland in 1854 at Serampore (Bengal). By 1882, there were 20 jute mills, 17 of which in the vicinity of Calcutta. In 1913/14 there were 64 mills.

The development of the railways and modern factories increased the demand for coal. In 1868 nearly half a million tons of coal were mined. In 1914 it had increased to 15.7 million tons employing a total of 1,51,376 persons.

Manganese mining began in 1892 in Madras. Other important mineral industries established were of gold, salt, mica and saltpetre. Iron and steel industry was established during the beginning of this century, when in 1907 Tata Iron and Steel Co. was floated by wholly Indian capital. Tea and Coffee plantations were organized during the 2nd-half of the 19th century.

## Impact on Trade and Industry

Cumulative effect of all this was the ruining of India's flourishing trade and indigenous industry. It is an undisputable fact that the British rule was a contributory cause of this decay. Though at first Bengal was the worst to suffer but by middle of 19th century the ruin of industry in the rest of the country was well-nigh complete. It is now established that India occupied a leading place in the world for over two hundred years in production of manufactured goods and export of these and that in matters of trade the balance was in favour of exports. But by mid-19th century she lost this position and was transformed into a plantation for the production of raw materials and a dumping ground for the cheap manufactured goods, from the west.





The general impression that India has never been an industrial country is misleading. Indian arts and crafts have been an important contributory factor to her immense wealth from time immemorial. The chief industry in India was the weaving of cotton, silk and wool. Bengal, Lucknow, Ahmedabad, Nagpur and Madura were important centres of cotton industry and fine shawls were manufactured in the Punjab and Kashmir. Brass, copper and bell-metal wares were manufactured all over India, some of the notable centres being Banaras, Tanjore, Poona, Nasik and Ahmedabad. Jewellery, stone carving, feligree work in gold and silver and artistic work in marble, sandalwood, ivory and glass formed other important industries. In addition, there were various other miscellaneous arts and crafts such as tannery, perfumery, paper-making etc. The carrying trade was also largely in the hands of the Indians. Down to the beginning of the 19th century the ship building industry was more developed in India than in England. Like the Indian textile industry, it aroused the jealousy of English manufacturers and its progress and development were restricted by legislation.

### **Rise of Urban Centres**

Towns in India were non-industrial in character. They were, firstly, religious and pilgrimage centres like Banaras, Puri, Allahabad etc. Secondly, political centres such as seats of government like Poona, Tanjore, Lucknow etc. and thirdly trade centres like Mirzapur on the trade route from Central India to Bengal. The second type of town was the most common of all and the urban handicrafts were mainly to be found in it.

During the nineteenth century with the increase in foreign trade and with India becoming a dumping ground of foreign goods, ports and chief trade centres developed like Calcutta, Bombay and Madras and also Murshidabad, Patna and Banaras along the Ganges.

Cities like these also became the receiving stations of western impact with the presence and mingling of both foreign and native government officials and traders. The three main port cities gradually grew into huge metropolises and served as axis of trade, education, culture and political power. They controlled large mofussil areas which were dependant on what was happening in the presidency town of that area. Their importance was further enhanced as regional head-quarters of military establishments and as emanating points of railways. They attracted people from towns and villages either to pursue higher education or in search of jobs in Government offices or factories or try their luck in business enterprises. These cities in their architecture, in their composition of the population and their occupations are typical products of the British rule and the conflicts arising out of confrontation with the West.

Their gradual expansion in size due to ever increasing population and government and business activity required large housing projects such as offices for government and commercial establishments, factories, markets, residential areas and so on. For the first time problems emerged of town-planning in the modern sense including provision of civic amenities, movement of traffic, civic administration etc.



Especially may be noted the vast building projects of the government where public money was involved, in the design of which, quite understandably, questions were raised whether they should follow European or Indian prototypes or both. At any rate the kind of inter-mingling and hybridization that was going on culturally and socially also can be seen in many of the architectural projects of the previous century culminating with the Victoria Memorial, Calcutta.

While these cities and towns became the venues of cultural hybridization they also became the centres of activity of the militants who strove to arouse the social consciousness of the masses for reform of the society, revival of Hindu religion and finally leading to the National Movement. It is in these cities where also was felt the crisis in Indian art and which also became centres for fresh thinking on aesthetic matters and reconsideration of old values.

### **Calcutta**

Calcutta grew up into a metropolis from a small factory and strategic fort surrounded by dense forests and marshy land. The name derives from the area formerly occupying the site of modern Bow Bazar. This name is also connected with the worship of the goddess Kali. During the second half of 19th century it became the capital of the Indian empire and the official residence of the Viceroy and Governor General. Besides, Calcutta had a superior jurisdiction over all of Eastern India making Calcutta India's principal legal as well as administrative centre. It had grown in importance mainly as a seaport situated on a navigable river and connected by converging lines of railways, rivers, navigable canals, and roads with rich valleys of Ganges and Brahmaputra, whose produce it exported overseas, while it supplied their dense population with the products and manufactures of other countries. By 1901 its population was 11,06,738, as the second populous city in British Empire, after London.

In the centre of the town stood Fort William, surrounded by the maidan. North of this were the shops and business houses of the Europeans, whose residential quarter abounded it on the East. To the South and South-East lay the European suburbs of Ballygunge and Alipore, in the latter was situated the residence of the Lt. Governor of Bengal. Governor's Secretariate and that of the Viceroy, together with a host of minor functionaries of both governments, occupied a maze of offices in the mile square between Clive Street and Government House, a vast and ponderous bureaucracy.

Its principal public buildings, all in European style, may be enumerated thus: Government House was completed in 1804, which took seven years to build at a cost of 13 lakhs. Its construction was ordered by Marquis of Wellesley while its design was based on that of Kedleston Hall in Derbyshire, the structure consisting of four great wings running to each point of the compass from a central pile, approached by a magnificent flight of steps on the north. The buildings also contained the Council Chamber in which the Supreme Legislature held its sittings. Belvedere, in Alipore, was the official residence of the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal since 1854. It was originally built for Warren Hastings amidst extensive and





well-kept grounds. West of the Government House, was built the imposing structure of High Court in somewhat florid Gothic, completed in 1872. The design is said to have been suggested by the Town Hall at Ypres. Between the Government House and the High Court stood the Town Hall, a large building in Doric style, approached by a noble flight of steps leading up to the grand portico, built in 1804 at a cost of 7 lakhs containing many interesting statues and portraits. Mint in the north covered  $18\frac{1}{2}$  acres. Built during 1824/30 in Doric style, the central portico being a copy in half size of the Parthenon at Athens. The Post Office (1870) and Writer's Building were put up at Dalhousie Square and the Victoria Memorial Hall in the middle of the maidan, the construction of which took more than a decade. It resembles St. Paul's of London and is a very fine example of Italian High Renaissance style on monumental scale. Together with the buildings programme also were erected a host of statues and monuments usually commissioned from European sculptors e.g. Ochterlony column in Maidan, 165' high with a Saracenic capital, statues of James Prinsep (founder of the science of Indian Numismatics), Bentinck, Hardinge, Mayo, Queen Victoria and the equestrian statue of Lord Roberts.

In contrast to the European residences and imposing Government buildings the native town and business centre around Burra Bazar in the north was squalid, overcrowded kuccha and brick tenements and houses traversed by ill-arranged roads, narrow and tortuous lanes. The heterogenous population was composed of outside groups, the non-Bengali labour force, the Marwari and Gujarati traders, the Eurasians manning the vital communications services and the small but exclusive European Society, the largest in the East. For majority of the Bengali residents Calcutta's chief attraction, other than the courts and offices, were the educational institutions. Together with the University itself and the distinguished colleges around it in the heart of the crowded Bengali residential area of North Calcutta were the focus of a stimulating cultural life. There were the learned societies, theatres, museums, art galleries, libraries and a flourishing book-publishing industry and the daily press.

For many of its residents, Indian as well as non-Indian, Calcutta was a cosmopolitan enclave in a foreign land but for the Bengali majority there was an intimate relationship between the city and the country round it. For them Calcutta was Bengal's city, where half the total urban population of that presidency lived. Compared to other presidencies, in Bengal, there was one great city, a few towns, and innumerable villages.

### **Printing and the Press**

The art of printing was introduced into India by the Portuguese missionaries in the 16th century, but it did not make much progress until after the establishment of British rule. The multiplication of printing presses in the country made for a wider distribution of books in Indian languages; the sacred religious texts, some of them for the first time reduced to writing, now became available to a considerably wider circle of people. In the wake of British rule the public press also developed. The first newspapers were started by Englishmen in English in Bengal in the closing decades of the 18th century. The first Indian



newspaper was the Bengal Gazette started in 1816. The vernacular press sprang up soon afterwards in which Ram Mohan Roy played a role through the publication of his pamphlets. By 1823, there were four Indian language newspapers in Calcutta alone, two of them in Bengali and two in Persian. In 1818 was started Samachar Darpan, a Government weekly, for the publication of Bengali translations of official orders. The Indian press prominently discussed social questions like prohibition of Sati e.g. by Ram Mohan Roy's 'Sambad Kaumudi', established in 1821. A public opinion began to be formed for the first time. Government policy towards the public press altered between control and full freedom. It was again Ram Mohan Roy who campaigned for freedom of press established in 1838.

The press continued to expand with the growing national movement which lent support to it, and vernacular newspapers multiplied rapidly. Amrit Bazar Patrika, launched in 1868 and issued bilingually in English and Bengali, was the consistent supporter of the nationalist movement. Barendra Kumar Ghosh, the brother of Aurobindo founded "Yugantar" in 1907 as the first genuinely revolutionary newspaper.

Papers such as the Times of India (founded in 1838 as Bombay Times), The Statesman, The Pioneer and the Civil and Military Gazette, which grew up in the second half of the century, had a sound and restraining influence on both European and Indian thought. They played a great part in the political education of the Indian middle classes and along with such Indian-owned English papers as The Hindu (1878) of Madras and The Leader of Allahabad, established a firm tradition of journalistic integrity and propriety. Incidentally, the reviews of annual art exhibitions arranged by the Indian Society of Oriental Art (see chapter III) in Calcutta, which appeared in The Statesman and The Englishman during 1920s, are among the first such reviews of public art exhibitions which also constitute earliest examples of journalistic art criticism in India discussing and interpreting art trends of the time (see Appendix I (A)). Although the authors are not always mentioned there is evidence that such knowledgeable individuals had penned these writings like Stella Kramrisch, Binay Kumar Sarkar and O. C. Ganguly.

The introduction of English education and printing presses started process of far-reaching consequences. The English language opened up a whole world of new knowledge, to educated Indians. Translations were made of English classics into native languages. Scientific study of Indian languages was undertaken. English scholars helped by Indians, compiled grammars and dictionaries of these languages. Contacts with English literature led to the development of all types of prose literature in these languages whereas previously poetry had dominated the field completely. Not only the forms of novel, the essay and the drama were adopted but later on short story also developed as a genre.

### **Introduction of English Education**

Although British dominated political life and trade at first they did not interfere in religious or educational affairs. They took hardly any interest in the development of education. Indians continued to study religious texts in tols and madrasas but subjects like natural sciences, history and economics did not concern them nor were they aware



or interested in the scientific progress and discoveries made in the west. The Charter Act of 1813 had provided that not less than Rs. 1,00,000/- should be spent by the Government annually for revival and improvement of literature, encouragement of learned natives and introduction of sciences among them. But in 1823, during the time of Hastings, it was decided to spend the amount on oriental learning exclusively.

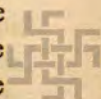
Already by the beginning of 19th century there began a clamour for English education. The Danish missionaries had taken the first step in this regard and an official of the East India Company had prepared a report on the idea of setting a network of schools for teaching English. Outside Bengal in 1821, plans were approved for starting an English school and a Medical Board for the diffusion of western medical knowledge in Bombay. Two private colleges, Hindu College (1817) and Bishop's College (1818), were started at Calcutta by the efforts of missionaries like David Hare and of Ram Mohan Roy.

At this time divergent views were held with regard to the educational policy by the Government on the one hand and the leading and liberal Indians on the other. The Committee of Public Instruction was divided into two parties popularly known as the "Orientalists" and the "Anglicists". In 1823, a petition was submitted by Ram Mohan Roy against establishing of Sanskrit College and demanding "a more liberal and enlightened system of instruction, embracing mathematics, natural philosophy.....employing a few gentlemen of talents and learning educated in Europe."

But the issue was finally settled by Thomas Macaulay who in 1834 was appointed president of the Committee for public instruction. He vehemently denounced classical learning and in his famous minutes of 1835 categorically declared that the policy of Government, was to encourage English education in India. Calcutta had its first Medical College in 1836 and with the opening of an Engineering College at Roorkee in 1848, a beginning was made in the field of technical education.

The popularity and demand of English education increased further with the declaration of Lord Hardinge that Government posts were to be filled by open competition and knowledge of English would be given preference. In 1854, Wood's despatch laid down the foundations on which the educational system in British India has since developed in which a comprehensive plan was worked out from primary to university level. Accordingly, Universities modelled on the pattern of London University of those days were established in the presidency towns of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras in 1857. It may be pointed out that the kind of education visualised was excessively literary and insufficiently vocational. It was neither adjusted to the industrial needs of the country nor designed to further industrial and economic progress for its sole aim was to supply lower grade clerks to the government.

In spite of the shortcomings of the educational system and although confined to a few it produced memorable results. It not only qualified Indians for taking their share in the administration of their country but also inspired them with those liberal ideas which were sweeping over England and Europe generally, the effects of which were far-reaching. The





intensive study of English and the assimilation of western ideas through first hand sources gave a strong impetus to the creative genius of the people, as the history of Indian reawakening in the 19th century amply testifies. There was once more a strong creative impulse in every sphere, a new urge to move on, which in the long run helped the development of Modern Indian languages, making them fit vehicles for the transmission of the subtlest ideas and knowledge of the newest developments in science and technology. People were aroused from the slumber of ages and radical transformation began in social and religious ideas.

A critical outlook on the past and new aspiration for the future marked the new awakening. Reason and judgement took the place of faith and belief; superstition yielded to science resulting in a process of self-introspection out of which were born the movements of social reform.

### **Middle Class and the Bhadrak**

Among the most important results of the new educational system, however, was the growth of a professional middle class. The establishment of a single political authority, a uniform educational system, the development of internal communications, brought the educated people of India into close contact with each other. The emergence of the middle class, having the same type of education, possessing a common vehicle of expression, acquiring the same social and political outlook and conscious of the unity of economic interests linked with a few liberal professions, forged a new link of unity in the Indian social structure which cut across the earlier divisions, racial, linguistic, geographical and religious. It was the unity of the middle class, vocal and assertive, able to communicate with the foreign rulers in their own language and with the masses in theirs, that was mainly responsible for the growth of political consciousness among the people and a sense of Indian nation.

The middle class which was the dominant elite in Bengal had certain distinguishing features and was known as Bhadrak. The term literally means 'the respectable people', the 'gentlemen'. As a status Bhadrak is upper class and as an economic group it included some from both upper and lower but has excluded many middle class men like merchants and prosperous peasants. The new Bhadrak culture was the product of the urban environment of Calcutta, but it did not remain an exclusively urban phenomenon. In city, town and village this group of Bengalis claimed and were accorded recognition as superior in social status to the mass of their fellows.

They were distinguished by many aspects of their behaviour—their deportment, their speech, their dress, their style of housing, their eating habits, their occupation and their associations—and quite as fundamentally by their cultural values and their sense of social propriety, they belonged to the higher castes, a great majority of which were landholders employing others to work on the fields, for manual labour was considered degrading. Education was another hallmark of Bhadrak status. Their craze for English education qualified them for government service and the learned professions, the bulk of which was supplied by them. As courts, hospitals and schools were established, there were openings



for lawyers, doctors and teachers and the construction of railways created demands for accountants and clerks. The Bengal Bhadrakalok were quick to grasp these opportunities.

From education, which had given the Bhadrakalok their command of the professions, came another of the group's most distinctive attributes: a passionate attachment to Bengali language and literature. Under the stimulus of European contact in Calcutta Bhadrakalok intellectuals had refashioned Bengali as a rich literary language, freely borrowing forms and techniques from English. To the existing body of fine religious poetry, they added secular writing in a variety of forms: prose essays, histories, novels, short stories, dramas, and new styles of poetry. The development of elegant, literary Bengali, *sadhu bhasha*, was paralleled by an enrichment of the colloquial language through coinages, adaptations and extensive borrowings from European and other Indian vernaculars and at the same time, the Calcutta dialect, which was most directly influenced by these innovations, won acceptance with the Bhadrakalok as *chalit bhasha*, the standard colloquial form. The scale was set on this process when, in the latter half of the century, literary radicals began using *chalit bhasha* in prose writings. The Bengal Renaissance, was the product of a small group of Bhadrakalok intellectuals from the Calcutta colleges, who attracted or repelled by European values, had felt a compulsion to re-examine the philosophic basis of our culture.

1. The rational philosophy of the West had been weighed against Indian traditionalism.
2. An acquaintance with European scholarship had awakened an historical consciousness.
3. And the rediscovery of the great Hindu scriptures had brought a new appreciation of the Indian past.
4. Under the influence of Christianity and often in protest against it, reform movements had been attempted in Hinduism.
5. The structure of society had been subjected to critical scrutiny and there had been experimentation with new institutions.

Every stage of this process had been marked by intense and often bitter debate; but despite enduring disagreements, the cumulative effect was the creation of a new and distinct cultural synthesis.

The anglicization or 'aping' of the West, as it was disparagingly termed in a section of the Bhadrakalok, produced curious results. The English speaking Hindu "babu" was considered a "laughing stock" who produces nothing but words. The British disparagingly referred to it as the "Babu" culture. Even the Indians had joined in ridiculing the elite for their English affectations of speech, dress and manners, accusing them of monopolising professional appointments, of allying with the British bureaucracy to their own advantage. During 1910-1920, even Aurobindo, Bipin Pal, Rabindranath and those from the old moderate congress had also come under attack of this kind. There were a number of popular Bengali satires, on the Westernized elite which the journalists could use as models. Two good examples which have recently been republished are (i) Kalipurana Singha, "Hotum



Pyanchar Naksha", Calcutta, 1955. (ii) Teckchand Thakur, "Alaler Gharer Dulal", Calcutta, 1961. It is, incidentally, among this class of journalism in which can be included the caricatures of Gaganendranath executed between 1916 and 1921.

## **Social Reform Movement**

### *Brahmo Samaj*

In 1828 Raja Ram Mohan Ray founded the Brahmo Sabha with the purpose of reforming Hinduism by an appeal to the teaching of the Upanishads and to purge it of idolatry. His collaborator Devendranath Tagore continued this work and founded the Brahmo Samaj in 1845. Closely modelled on it, was Prarthana Samaj established in Bombay in 1867. They campaigned for remarriage of widows, against caste discriminations, practice of polygamy and prohibition of crossing the 'black water'. Brahmo Samaj was essentially a society, the members of which wished to "modernize" themselves, without having to become christians; and that "modernizing" at that time inevitably meant "anglicizing". It was only much later when "to anglicize" became a term of reproach. More than hundred years back, not only was it not considered impatriotic to anglicize oneself, but on the contrary, that it was the very mark of patriotism to want to modernize Hindu society and Indian polity, and that for this urgent work of renewal and reconstruction an imitation of England was the obvious, in fact, the only possible method. The self-complacency of a Lord Macaulay about the cultural superiority of Manchester over Banaras was universally shared by the Indian people as much as by the English. That a shelf of modern English books was worth whole libraries full of Oriental literature seemed self-evident at the time.

The need for modernization as felt by the Brahmo Samaj gives it the merit of being the pioneers of India's renaissance. To achieve his end Raja Ram Mohan Ray had to begin by forming an elite and can be called the father of modern intelligentsia in India. It is the men who formed the Brahmo elite who were in the forefront of the political struggle and the social reform movement. This elite has really been what the Brahmo Samaj was intended to be; a laven working away gradually from above downwards, affecting the whole mass of Indian society.

### *Arya Samaj*

Arya Samaj was founded by Dayanand Saraswati in 1877 in Bombay but found its congenial home in the Punjab. In 1874, Swami Dayanand had published his famous book 'Satyarth Prakash', to assert that the Vedas contain all the Truth. He considered his mission to be to restore the pure vedic religion of the Aryans. The Samaj started as a reaction against the proselytizing of religions. It affirmed equality among sexes and among all men, repudiated the caste system and untouchability. It fought against child marriage and closed door policy towards converts. If Brahmo Samaj was anglicizing in nature and including Theosophical Society catered only for a small elite, the Arya Samaj made its appeal, not to an English educated elite, but to the broad masses of his fellow countrymen. The Arya Samaj was meant to realize the ideal of unifying India, nationally, socially and



religiously, through Hindu "Sangathan". Islam was considered a factor of permanent discord, therefore, the Samajis also concentrated in reclaiming "lost" Hindus through "Shuddhikaran".

Their Hindu aggressionism added militancy in the National movement and Tilak could be regarded to have continued this work at the political level. Through the educational and other reform activities nationalism in Punjab developed its own colour of which the leading person was Lala Lajpat Ray, a product of Arya Samaj. Annie Besant claimed "the undermining of the belief in the superiority of the white races to the spreading of the Arya Samaj and the Theosophical Society".

### *Theosophical Society*

Theosophical Society in India was allied to Hindu Revival Movement. Originally founded in the United States by H. P. Blavatsky (1831-1891) and Col. H. S. Olcott (1832-1907), Adyar (a suburb of Madras) became its head-quarter in 1886. Madame Blavatsky made London her real home and Olcott, though frequently touring India, leant rather towards Ceylon and its Buddhism. If the Theosophical Society became a force in India, it undoubtedly owed that success principally to Mrs. Annie Besant. She arrived in India in 1893 at the age of 46 and began her real life work. She was the first amongst the Theosophists to preach the wisdom of Shri Krishna and Bhagwat Gita, while Madame Blavatsky's Theosophy was oriented towards Buddhism and the occult. Mrs. Besant at that time was almost violently Hindu and condemned the new religious movements like Brahmo Samaj, Arya Samaj, Vivekananda etc. She defined her task before her in her Autobiography in 1893 "The Indian work is, first of all, the revival, strengthening and uplifting of the ancient religions, Hinduism, Zoroastrianism and in Ceylon and Burma Buddhism. This has brought with it a new self-respect, a pride in the past, a belief in the future, and as an inevitable result, a great wave of patriotic life. The beginning of the rebuilding of a nation". In 1898 Mrs. Besant established Central Hindu School in Banaras which in 1915 became the Hindu University. But by that time her influence in religious circles had waned and she turned to politics and whole-heartedly joined the Indian struggle for independence.

### **Vivekananda**

The resurgent Hinduism in the wake of growing nationalism drew inspiration from Rama Krishna and Vivekananda who preached that service must be regarded as god. In 1893, Vivekananda left for America to attend the famous parliament of religions at Chicago, where he stayed for three years. While he continued his glowing interpretation of Hinduism in his speeches, he was all the time conscious of Hindu social life. He espoused "growth" not "revival" and therefore disagreed with the Theosophists. He stood for pride in India's past and her mission in the modern world. Though not in any way a political leader, his strong belief in the greatness of Hinduism was a source of inspiration to the extremist political leaders. His principal ideas are contained in the following extract from an address delivered in Colombo:



“If there is any land on this earth that can lay claim above all others to be the blessed *Punya Bhumi*, the land to which all must sooner or later, come, to account for their karma, the land to which every soul that is wending its way Godward must come to attain its perfection, the land where humanity has developed farthest towards gentleness, generosity, purity, and calm, the land above all of introspection and of spirituality, it is India. Here, from most ancient times, have been born the founders of religion, deluging the earth again and again with the pure and perennial waters of spiritual truth. Here have begun those tidal waves of philosophy that have traversed oceans, East and West, North and South, and now here again must rise that wave which is to spiritualise the material civilization of the modern world. Here are the life-giving waters with which shall be quenched the burning fire of materialism that is consuming the hearts of millions in other lands. The debt which the world owes to our motherland is immense.”

The influence of these ideas is obvious on Aurobindo, Sister Nivedita and James Cousins who extended these in their writings on art. (See chapter IV).

### **Educational Activities of the Reformists**

It was Bhawani Charan Banerji Upadhyaya (Vivekananda's classmate and friend of Ramakrishna and of Keshav Chandra Sen), a brilliant member of Brahmo Samaj, who, around the turn of the century, conceived the idea of National Colleges—educational institutions, unconnected with Government, but with a Western outlook. In 1897, he, Animananda (Rewachand Gyanchand of Sindh) and Rabindranath collaborated to start a school at Calcutta, which was transferred to Bolpur and thus Shantiniketan was established. But in 1902 their collaboration came to an end. In 1889, Arya Samaj opened the first Dayanand Anglo Vedic School at Lahore to perpetuate the memory of the founder of the Samaj with no subsidies taken from the Government. The aim was to implant independent nationalism in Punjab.

Members of the Prarthana Samaj, established under Brahmo influence in Bombay in 1867, believed more in “works” rather than “faith” and concentrated on social reform and educational activities. One of its leading members, R. G. Bhandarkar, a great Sanskritist, established the famous institute named after him at Poona. M. G. Ranade, another of his great associates who was a very distinguished judge, is regarded as the father of the Renaissance in Western India. Under his guidance and leadership was founded the Deccan Education Society which enlisted ‘life workers’ “to do for patriotic motives what Christian missionaries were doing out of religious devotion.” The most worthy disciple of Ranade was G. K. Gokhale, who was to become the leading Moderate politician with whom Tilak developed differences and separated to lead the Extremist factions subsequently. Tilak in Revivalism as in politics sided the faction of Dayanand and Annie Besant.

D. K. Karve concentrated his efforts on the uplift and education of women. He established a girls' school in 1907 and by 1916 was able to realise the idea of





Indian Women's University. This was the first "free" University in India being completely independent of the government with an appropriate curriculum suited to women's needs and Indian vernacular language adopted as media for all instruction.

### Nationalism

Regarding the rise of Nationalism what is relevant here to note are the two principal but divergent ideologies held by its spokesmen who towards the end of the 19th century came to be known as the Moderates and the Extremists.

Similar opposing ideologies prevailed in the social and religious spheres offering different recipes for the Indian Renaissance. The Revivalists/Traditionalists stood for insularity and were opposed to conscious synthesis. For them the key to the revival was in the Indian tradition, in recapturing the genius of the Golden Age. As the decline had come due to the association with alien Muslims and British, so foreign conquest was explained as the result of internal errors, which could be corrected, but not out of any inherent Indian inferiority. The pride in a great past (as common inheritance) could be the inspiration for a great national future.

The Moderates/Reformists/Constitutionalists stood for synthesis. They were opposed to insularity which they held as the cause of Indian backwardness and decay of Indian civilization. Hence this mistake was not to be repeated. India had to accept and learn from Europe the universal truth of rationalism, liberalism and secularism. The ideal of Hindu nation was inadequate. The road to progress was through education, law, administration, social institutions etc.

Corresponding to the two opposed view points of Indian nationalism were two view points of the British. The Liberals among the British administrators believed in encouraging the nationalist aspirations among the English educated elite to prepare them for sharing responsibilities of the Government so that the British can govern well. The Constitutionalists were encouraged by them and they in turn had faith in the British values and promises.

But the Liberals were in minority. The Paternalists were in greater majority and in key positions during later part of the 19th century who were responsible in inflaming the extremists. They represented the Indian Civil Service. They considered themselves wise, benevolent and impartial, dedicated to the interests of the good of all. They regarded the educated Indians as rivals and distrusted them, who according to them, did not represent the Indian masses and their wishes, but as a class out to exploit the masses with the power they wished to gain. For the I.C.S., bhadrak had lost touch with the people (the real people whom the I.C.S. was trying to defend) and considered bhadrak as cultural hybrids. In 'aping the west' they had destroyed their cultural integrity and created a 'stucco civilization' which had made them a "*laughing-stock*".





The sequence of events during the 19th century opens from the clamour for political reforms and a say and place in administration to Home Rule and Swaraj, culminating in the declaration of freeing the country once for all from the British control.

The first generation of the English educated Indians was completely bowled over by Western culture as brought to India by the British. They came to regard British connection with India as a providential dispensation for the good of India. They visualized political and social development hand in hand and believed that social reform was of basic importance even for political advancement. It was the moderates who participated in the founding of Indian National Congress in 1885. Allan Octavian Hume, a retired civilian of Poona, joined hands with Surendranath Bannerji. They formulated the aim of congress as "directly to enable all earnest labourers in the National cause to become personally known to each other, to discuss and decide upon the political operations to be undertaken during the ensuing year, and indirectly, this conference will form the germ of a Native Parliament, and if properly conducted, will in a few years constitute an unanswerable reply to the assertion that India is unfit for any form of representative institutions." The joint efforts of British and Indian democrats for the substitution of dominative by democratic form of government, were not primarily moved by narrow nationalist motives, but by a genuine devotion to Truth and Justice.

But the attitude of the administration towards Congress hardened. And the British Government instead of responding to the popular wishes passed harsher and unpopular regulations. Government indifference to the wishes of the masses came to climax with the decision of Lord Curzon to partition Bengal Presidency. This was a shrewd move to curb the influence of Bengali Nationalists by creating a Muslim majority province out of merger of East Bengal with Assam while reducing Bengalis into a minority in the other part which included Bihar and Orissa. The birth of extremism is attributed to this momentous incident.

The leaders of this virile strain of Nationalism were the generation which came of age around 1880s (e.g. Tilak—who not only asked for Swadeshi, boycotting of foreign goods, but gave the call for Swaraj, completely doing away with the influence of the foreign government). The ideology of resurgent Hinduism as put forth by Vivekananda provided the social and religious basis for this school of nationalists. While acknowledging the benefits of British rule, this school refused to recognize it as a providential dispensation. It further maintained that these benefits would be nullified if they were not followed by home rule which was their logical culmination. The demand for self-rule cannot be satisfied by good rule by a foreign bureaucracy. Political advancement is primary to all social reform. The latter will automatically follow political independence and, therefore, the national movement must not dissipate its strength in fighting for social reform but must concentrate on the struggle for liberation from the British yoke. For that, all means, whether constitutional or otherwise, should be used.

This stand was more nationalistic than that of their predecessors. If the first generation suffered from an inferiority complex with regard to the West, this generation was over-



compensating for it. The neglect of social reform further underlined their backward-looking orientation and made them line up with socially reactionary elements.

Regarding the events of 1905, in Bengal and the ensuing Swadeshi movement Gokhale has said: "The tremendous upheaval of popular feeling which has taken place in Bengal in consequence of the partition, will constitute a landmark in the history of our national progress. For the first time since British rule began, all sections of the Indian community, without distinction of caste and creed, have been moved, by a common impulse and without the stimulus of external pressure, to act together in offering resistance to a common wrong." And further :

".....The true Swadeshi movement is both a patriotic and an economic movement. The idea of Swadeshi or 'one's own country' is one of the noblest conceptions that have ever stirred the heart of humanity.....The devotion to motherland', which is enshrined in the highest Swadeshi, is an influence so profound and so passionate that its very thought thrills and its actual touch lifts one out of oneself."

Bipin Chandra Pal, the extremist leader wrote in 1907, in the "New Spirit," about the fervour of the time while describing Bande Mataram.—'Hail Mother'—the cry had become 'a mantra, a power, an inspiration, a revelation, truth'. 'Originally a beautiful song, describing the delight of India, our Motherland, it was taken from the novel *Anand Math* of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and at this time became the National Anthem of Renascent India.

Bipin Chandra Pal rendered famous and popular through his writings the allegorical interpretation of the "Mother" thus :

*Jagaddhatri*—the world mother, Mother as she has been.

*Kali* —The Mother as she is, covered with blood, despoiled of all wealth, without a cloth to wear, like our country today.

*Durga* —The Mother she is to be, ten handed, the wielder of many arms, trampling her enemy, lion at her feet and devouring her enemies. With her are Lakshmi and Vani (knowledge and science), Kartik—strength, Ganesha—success. She now represents the Eternal Spirit of Indian Race.

Declared Aurobindo Ghosh: "Independence in all our movements is the goal of life, Hinduism alone will fulfill this aspiration of ours. Nationalism is a religion that comes from God. Nationalism cannot die. Nationalism in India is a harmony between the New ideal of Mazzini and the old ideal of Sannyasa."

Such were the new ideals, the revolutionary forces at this moment which captured the imagination of the rising generation.





## SECTION II

### *Western Impact on Indian Art*

After outlining the political and social situation during the 19th and early 20th century in the previous section, I shall now try to describe in brief the state of art during the same period in India to complete the analysis of the milieu against which the output of the three painters has to be seen. The information given in Section I and in the following pages will enable to work out the psychological climate in which the artists spent their childhood and youth, which moulded their mind and formed their motivation, as such were the factors which affected their mind—impact of nationalist activities together with the newly acquired acquaintance of indigenous art, the situation in the art schools and the phenomenal success of a highly westernized painter, Ravi Varma.

### **Indian Painting in the 19th Century**

The keynote of the art situation in 19th century is the phenomena of the emergence of urban commercial centres due to constantly expanding trade with the British, the simultaneously growing European impact on such towns and along with it the increasing influence of western realism on Indian painting. Parallel to this phenomena is the breakdown of the traditional arts as the indigenous power became weaker. Since the local princes and rulers gradually lost their authority and influence consequently the patronage that had sustained the growth of art was no more forthcoming.

The paintings produced in the 19th century can be classed in three groups—each conditioned by the patronage that was offered. First the mention may be made of various forms in which vestiges of traditional painting persisted. In the northern hills due to geographical isolation it continued more or less on traditional basis but had already lost its vitality. In several princely states in Rajasthan, in Audh and in Deccan a late phase of Mughal or Mughal inspired painting appeared which was highly ornate and conventional in which already a combination of incongruous elements like stylized linearity, schematic modelling and unconvincing perspective devices were freely adopted.

But there were areas like the pilgrimage centres of Nathdwara in Rajasthan and Puri in Orissa which were largely uninfluenced by the British Raj hence the art produced at these places shows very little impact of European realism. This art in the form of paintings on cloth or on paper, with cheap pigments, which is generally termed as folk, (and the artists known as “Patua”), seems stylistically a simplified and bolder version of the art practised in court centres before. Another variant is found in the Kalighat paintings of Calcutta wherein the forms have been brought out in emphatic volume by means of large brush-strokes of rudimentary colour and thick bold outlines.<sup>1</sup> These are, however, again, already a cross between folk (or Jadu Pat paintings of Bengal) and “native characters” paintings parotnized by the British in India. Purer are the newly discovered paintings and allied forms of activities of the rural peasant communities all of which together were destined to have a profound influence on the 20th century Indian painting.<sup>2</sup>





The story of the discovery of folk and rural arts, forms an interesting chapter in the discovery of the traditional past of the country which cannot be dealt with here. But it may be noted that the Tagore brothers were among the first collectors of folk art of all forms especially of the eastern Indian region. It must also be mentioned that in Europe and in Russia towards the close of the 19th century and in the first decade of the present, rural arts were gaining the attention of the artists as a logical continuation of the efforts of the anthropologists who brought together large collections of them.<sup>3</sup> We know how during his academic career Kandinsky had undertaken a survey of this kind and the impact of Byzantine icons and Bavarian glass on his paintings, also how profoundly Negro sculpture affected Picasso and the Expressionists during the first decade of this century.<sup>4</sup>

### **Company School and the impact of European realistic techniques**

The second group of paintings to be discussed here is variously called "company school" or "Indo-British painting" executed by Indian painters of the Mughal lineage for the British colonial administrators. Together with this kind of painting and the presence and activities of British painters in India which resulted in the first hand knowledge of European naturalistic techniques and cultivation of taste for such paintings gave rise to the fashion of collecting examples of European art that in turn further strengthened growing Indian bias for illusionistic devices. How strong and deep rooted its affect was on the Indian mind is not realized today, hence I like to go over it in some detail.

### **British travellers in India**

From the later part of 18th century and onward, the British, who came to India with the backing of political power, did not feel the need to mingle with natives and preferred to remain aloof and indifferent.

But for a section of the company officials and administrators the long periods of isolation were taken as opportunities for mental activity and channels for cultivated interests. Even some of the women accompanying them had cultivated tastes and intelligence. Many of them filled in their leisure hours in studying Sanskrit and exploring ancient Indian literature (Sir William Jones, a judge of the Supreme Court at Calcutta), Ancient Hindu law and astronomy (Henry Colebrooke), investigation of manners and customs of the inhabitants, Natural history and delineation of the principal places and picturesque scenery (James Forbes, Marianne Postans and her husband).

The latter preoccupation was a result of the rise of the cult of the "picturesque" which is a characteristic phenomena of late 18th century England.<sup>5</sup> Marvelling on the beauties of the ruder and wilder aspect of nature and fascination for local manners and customs were its peculiar predisposition. Such a cult had no geographical limits and for the men who came from such a background, India provided a wealth of picturesque qualities: the temples, the bazars, the festivals, the villages, the foliage and the native characters. We know this from the travel accounts of J. Johnson, (travelled in Ceylon), Lady Falkland (travelled in Bombay region), Mrs. Postans (Hyderabad, Sind), Captain Mundy (Nor-



thern and Eastern India), Emily Eden (tireless sketcher, who especially has described Diwali, Kali, Suttée and Moharram Festivals in Bengal), Augusta Deane (Delhi region), and Emma Roberts (Himalayan region).

Their efforts resulted in many travel narrations, profusely illustrated, very often by themselves or only containing illustrations of scenery in the countryside, or costumes and architecture as the following title suggests "Sketches illustrating the manner and customs of the Indians and Anglo-Indians", William Taylor (1842). While the British in India who practised sketching themselves were not always highly accomplished, yet their technique and taste were formed by how picture making was done in England especially as William Gilpin had explained and laid down in his *Tours* (1782-1809) and *Three Essays*; 'On Picturesque Beauty', 'On Picturesque Travel' and 'On Sketching Landscape'. It was a selective realism blending painters of such diverse attitudes like Claude and Poussin, Ruisdael and Hobbema.<sup>6</sup>

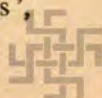
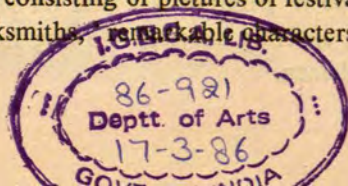
### British Painters in India

Second half of 18th century also saw the arrival of British artists in India. Tilly Kettle arrived in Madras in 1769 and stayed in India till 1776. He was followed by John Zoffany (1783-9) and Arther Davies (1785-95). They were well-established painters in England. Experts in oil medium, they specialized in portraits and large scale historical scenes. But fashion for oil paintings soon declined in India because the medium was severely effected by Indian weather and the large size of the paintings made it cumbersome to carry home after retirement. It was restricted mostly for presentation pictures.

The large size oil painting was replaced by portrait miniatures on ivory. John Smart (1785-95) and Ozias Humphrey (1785-7) were leaders in this technique in England and specially the former earned a steady income in Madras. But George Chinnery (1802-25) eclipsed them all.

Towards the end of 18th century the water-colour drawings became the most widely used by British artists in India either ends in themselves or as studies for subsequent engravings, aquatints or lithographs.<sup>7</sup> William Hodges was the first to use this medium very skillfully, recording a number of romantic views of India during 1780's. His example was quickly followed by others, especially notable were Thomas Daniels and his nephew William who stayed in India from 1768 to 1794. From these drawings they prepared engravings which were published as albums e.g. *Views of Calcutta* (1786-8), *A picturesque voyage to India* (1810), etc. The demand for such engravings increased and more and more artists took to this profession, namely James Wales (views of the island of Bombay and Ellora—1791/92), James Moffat (views of Calcutta, Behrampur, Monghyr and Banaras—1805), Baltasar Solvyn (Manners and customs and dresses of Natives of Bengal—1799). Also were announced albums consisting of pictures of festivals, bazar characters, native trades—~~butchers, carpenters, blacksmiths,~~ remarkable characters', 'whole-length figures of natives', etc. (see plate 3)

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### Indian painters encounter European techniques

The phenomenal popularity of such engravings among the colonial residents in India and in their home country set the tone for British contact with Indian painters and that of Indian painters with the European technique of achieving natural effects. The British artist was very expensive and amateur painting had its own limitations, nor were there opportunities to learn sketching technique in India in the absence of art tutors. Hence the search for Indian substitutes. Many Indian traditional painters had moved into presidency towns in search of work whom the colonial first met in the bazars. The areas that had come under British domination did not have a strong painting tradition at that time, consequently the bazar craftsman whom they encountered was not necessarily conventional but willing to satisfy the new patron because that was the only way open to earn a living. Naturally he was eager to learn and adopt the technique as demanded of him.

The local artist had already been employed in menial form to decorate punkah frames or for preparing maps for the extensive surveys undertaken by Royal Engineers. His abilities were recognized, he was regarded ingenious in imitation, apt and clever, having delicacy of touch, though deficient in perspective and chiaroscuro but adaptive to instruction.<sup>8</sup>

#### *Lucknow*

Perhaps it was in Lucknow where the Indian painters had the first direct contact with the actual work and techniques of European painting. The Nawabs of Audh from Asaf-ud-Daulah's reign onwards had been consistently patronizing British painters in India namely Tilly Kettle (1771-73), John Zoffany (1784-1785) and Ozias Humphrey (1786). They had all made portraits and drawings of the rulers and princes there. Kettle's portraits of the Nawab had already been adapted by the local artists for mass versions.<sup>9</sup> English painters continued to visit and work at Lucknow till the time of Wajid Ali Khan in the mid-19th century like George Place, Thomas Langroft, Charles Smith and George Beechy. Illustrations had been commissioned from the local artists by Gentil (1763-75) for his history of Mughal empire and his book on Hindu dieties. One of the artists employed was Nevasi Lal. Two types of painting thus flourished at Lucknow during Asaf-ud-Daulah's reign. One, flamboyant with harsh colours, violent purples, flaring reds and brilliant yellows matching the corrupt luxuriance of the court. Side by side flourished the 'native sets' in pale, insipid water colours.

#### *Murshidabad*

Actually Murshidabad was among the first new cities in the late 18th century where Indian painters painted pictures for the British and foreign tourists' consumption.<sup>10</sup> Miniature portraits, depicting Englishmen in cocked hats, reclining on cushions with hookahs and pan boxes, English ladies with elaborately dressed hair and voluminous skirts sitting straight backed on their ivory chairs. Also favourite were the sets of rulers in simple style and economy of line. A novel type of painting was that on mica on which festivals and ceremonies were painted including sporting subjects showing hunting scenes with English gentlemen as well as Indian noblemen.



### Patna

The most flourishing centre of the new Europeanised Indian painting, however, was Patna from the end of 18th century to about 1870 when the city lost its importance.<sup>11</sup> The style reached there from Murshidabad when certain Kayastha artists moved in there. One of them was Sewak Ram (c. 1770—c. 1830) of whom Ishwari Prasad (co-teacher of Abanindranath at the Calcutta School of Art) was descendant. His *firka* sets and festival scenes show conscious adoption of perspective and use of water colour but possessing a certain stiffness. Another migrant was Hulas Lal (c. 1785-1875) who had painted a portrait in oils in European style (mentioned by Bishop Heber). His cousin Jairam Das was employed by Sir Charles D'Oyly. In the first half of 19th century many family workshops were established producing the usual popular sets and artists came down to the banks of Ganges to sell them to the British travellers.

The quick and quite convincing adoption of European techniques by Patna artists was through Sir Charles D'Oyly, the Company's opium Agent at Patna until 1833. He was a sedulous explorer of romantic countrysides and a competent amateur artist and while at Dacca (1808-12) had taken lessons from Chinnery and had published three books of engravings, "The costume and customs of Modern India" (1813), "The Europeans in India" (1813). In Patna he established his own lithographic press—"The Behar Lithography"—from which were issued the "The Behar Amateur Lithographic scrap-book" (1828-30) "Indian Sports" (1829) and "The costumes of India" (1830), from his own drawings. Also two natural history volumes in collaboration with his naturalist friend Webb-Smith: 'The Feathered Fowl of Hindustan' (1828) and Oriental Ornithology (1829). In these lithographs, Webb-Smith drew the birds while D'Oyly supplied landscapes. He engaged Jairam Das to transfer the sketches to stone, and for some of them the Patna artist provided the drawings. D'Oyly also supplied to Indian artists examples of his own work and also bundles of English engravings. (see plate 1)

### Banaras

Banaras too had painters who had established their own business of 'native characters' and Mica paintings. During the first half of 19th century the Rajas of Banaras (who had adopted many of the British manners in their style of living) employed the painters for doing portraits of the royal family, courtiers and friends.

### Delhi

The local speciality of Delhi painters and a commodity of lucrative trade was the miniature portrait on ivory usually in oval format. Portraits were made of Mughal emperors and their court beauties and also of the British. Of the earlier known painters was Ghulam Murtaza Khan (c. 1760-1840) and to attract British attention the most, was Raja Jivan Ram, who was attached to the suite of Lord William Bentinck.

But by 1870, the camera had reached Delhi and Lockwood Kipling in Delhi Gazetteer wrote in 1883 about it and how photography was resorted to by the portrait miniaturist to do away with harshness and stern conventionality.





### *Tanjore and Trichinopoly*

In the south at Tanjore and Trichinopoly developed local variations of the Indo-British paintings and their own native sets produced by what were locally named as "Moochys".<sup>12</sup> They painted pictures of courts and deities. Towards end of 18th century arrived painters from Hyderabad who had already adjusted themselves to the British fashions. Also around 1800, Serfagee, was installed on the Tanjore throne, who was as familiar in European ways and as westernized as Asaf-ud-Daulah in Lucknow.

The native sets became now more widely produced though much closer to the British taste; but mostly of typical characters, professions and bazars of the South India. Widely painted were also Hindu gods and goddesses. Some of these were painted on card or paper, but most were on wooden tablets or cloth. The cloth or board was first carefully prepared with a paste of powder and gum. The indigenous colours were then mixed with a white earth called 'sudha' which is found in the district. When finished the whole picture was polished with a shell or cloth until it had a hard gloss. Many of the pictures were elaborately bejewelled with fragments of glass, stone or metal and were then richly gilded. Most of these pictures were intended for Hindu public. The faces of the gods and goddesses are depicted with large eyes, with heavily lined features and formal symmetry while the figures have rounded modelling and shading. (see plate 2)

### **Phenomenon of aping British manners**

The third group of paintings to be dealt here will require a brief consideration of the phenomenon of adoption and aping of British manners and style of living which resulted in mass scale importation of western bric-a-bric, furniture, porcelain, china ware, engravings, garden sculptures, draperies which were set up in houses designed in curious combinations of Greek and other elements of western architecture.

At first it is the native rulers who indulged in such indiscriminate aping of the alien suzerains partly to impress them and their own subjects by the show of pomp and luxury and partly it was just indulgence. The classic example of this kind of blatant imitation of British culture is Asaf-ud-Daulah and subsequent Nawabs of Audh. About him L. F. Smith wrote in 1715 "Asaf-ud-Daulah is fond of lavishing his treasures on gardens, palaces, horses, elephants, and above all on fine European guns, lustres, mirrors and all sorts of European manufacturers, more especially English; from a two-penny deal board painting of ducks and drakes, to the elegant paintings of a Lorraine or a Zophani and from a little dirty paper lantern to mirrors and lustres which cost £ 2 or £ 3000 each". Writing in 1803, Lord Valentine noticed the same indiscriminate collection of 'whimsical curiosities purchased by the late vazier Asof-ud-Dowlah, consisting of several thousand English prints framed and glazed, Chinese drawings and ornaments, mirrors of all shapes and sizes, lustres, and innumerable other articles of European manufacture'. The aping of British manners continued with Saadat Ali (1718-1814) and Ghazi-ud-Din Haider (1814-27). About the first it is said that when a package arrived containing Worcestershire China he was impatient to open it as a child would be with a new plaything and immediately gave orders for invita-



tions to be sent to the whole British settlement for a breakfast, *a la fourchette*, the next morning.<sup>13</sup>

### Indian collections of European object d'art

The tendency to adopt western manners was a result of not only due to the close contact with British communities but also as a genuine effort in modernization, which at that time was synonymous with Europeanization. This was especially so in the way of living of Rajas of Banaras and those of Tanjore during the first half of 19th century. With many princes of native states, their nobles and courtiers and the newly emerged rich traders, such a way of life became the norm during the 19th century. In this regard further mention may be made of Maharajas of Travancore, Sayaji Rao Gaekwad of Baroda, Rajas of Aundh, Prince Dwarkanath Tagore, Salar Jungs of Hyderabad and Tatas of Bombay, in particular Ratan Tata and Dorab Tata.<sup>14</sup> They were connoisseurs of a sort and assiduous collectors of western things and the passion for collecting reached a climax with Salar Jung III during the early 20th century.<sup>15</sup> With exception of Dwarkanath Tagore, the family collections of the rest, are now turned into museums and in particular from the point of view of this thesis their collections of European paintings assume importance as pace setters of artistic taste and norms. (see plate 5)

The European paintings collected by them with the help of English advisers during their foreign tours were not always the best. They represent not enlightened collecting but the general trend and taste of the typical Victorian rich man. What they bought were paintings of minor masters, mostly of 19th century, occasionally of 17th or 18th century and inferior copies of old masters who were recognized as such like Raphael, Titian, Rubens etc. The 19th century masters whose works were collected were usually those who had official approval of the academy. Thus Leighton, Watts, Bouguereau were bought and incidentally it may be lamented that an opportunity to acquire works of great artists either of 19th century or earlier was lost, considering the fact that prices of these and speculation in them had not reached to the proportions as it has during this century.

### Ravi Varma and academic-realistic painting

The stage was thus set for the emergence of an Indian painter like Ravi Varma who was active during the last quarter of the 19th century. He was promoted by the new class of Europeanised patrons whose taste was formed and approved in association with the British, having inculcated the preference for oil medium and realistic devices of modelling, perspective and *tromp l'oeil* drawing due to direct familiarity with examples of European painting. Such representational techniques had been used by Indian painters for nearly a century till then, only in the oil medium no one had yet achieved the kind of mastery which Ravi Varma did. The choice of subjects was also set, single and family portraits, and images of gods and goddesses which were especially popular in the South painted by Moomchys of Tanjore. Like many painters of Patna and Lucknow before, he too took lessons from an English painter. Thus Ravi Varma does not represent beginning of a new epoch but the high point



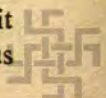


of the trend towards complete Europeanization of Indian taste and adoption of western techniques.<sup>16</sup>

Though born ( in 1848 ) at Kilimanoor in a princely family related to the ruling house of then Travancore State, Ravi Varma had links with Tanjore School. A Tanjore painter, Alagiri Nayudu, had taught portraiture to his uncle Raja Raja Varma, who took young Ravi Varma at the age of 14 to the palace at Trivendram to learn under Ramaswamy Naidu, the court painter.<sup>17</sup> It was here in 1868, the English painter Theodore Jenson arrived, through whom the fascinating world of oil-medium was revealed to the young Indian painter. Marriage with a royal princess earned him the prefix of Raja and a social standing no Indian artist had ever had before. This status brought him in contact with the British Resident at Trivendram and the Governor at Madras. Fame came to him through the prizes he won at the Madras Exhibitions of 1874 and 1878. His work was acclaimed at exhibitions held in Vienna and Chicago in 1892. Every Maharaja wanted portraits made by him and in particular those of Mysore and Baroda invited him to their States, for whom he executed a large number of paintings.

The British administrators of the Victorian era during the second half of 19th century were men of different temperament. They were horrified by the gross hybrid qualities of the Indo-British painting which had been so popular with the earlier colonialists. For them it was trivial and not deserving the status of true art. Similarly they thought of the sculptures which the archaeological explorations had brought to light. Drawn by the self-professed avowed aim of civilizing India, some of the Victorians took into their heads making Indians artistic minded as a corollary to the civilizing process. Indeed Lord Napier in 1871, then Governor of Madras, delivered a lecture significantly titled "the Fine Arts in India", to the Native Christian Literary Society of Madras, explaining how much scope Indian scenes, characters and Pauranic episodes offered to the Indian painter, recommending him to paint Indian mythology and life with the power of European Art.<sup>18</sup>

Ravi Varma's history paintings ( using the European academic nomenclature for paintings of mythological and religious themes ) can be regarded as fulfilling the Victorian aims who naturally were quick to acclaim him and offer their full support. Paintings like " Harishchandra " and " Shakuntala " were of high moral order following closely the accepted neoclassical manner. They have subdued lighting, meticulous modelling, rich though not bright colours, a mildly dramatic narrative ostensibly based on grandiose compositions, not unlike those of European followers of Ingres, who had evolved a kind of academic painting during the mid 19th century intermingling Romantic sensuality and academic mannerisms. Notwithstanding his defects, like harshness of his modelling and occasional stiffness of postures, in these paintings Ravi Varma attempted what no other Indian painter had done before and no one attempted to the same degree again. Although these paintings can be characterised as provincial form of European academism, this Indianisation of European academism is a significant development for India in bringing it into the orbit of European artistic trends. From then onward almost every phase of contemporaneous





Indian painting and sculpture in one way or the other show reflections of whatever new developments have taken place in the west, not excluding the avowedly nationalistic revivalist movement.

Ravi Varma perpetuated a kind of Indian feminine type which persists today in the wall calendars of deities, cinema posters and even in live form on the Hindi screen, popularised through the oleographs issued by his press established in Bombay around 1890. It is an idealized image matching again European academic nude paintings of e.g. Etty and Cabanal—sensuous, sweet, plump and luscious, full of eros—whether it be a goddess, epic heroine or Malabar beauty.<sup>19</sup>

Perhaps it is appropriate to talk of Kilimanoor School of academic painting with his brother and nephew also joining his band. Dhurandhar of the Bombay School of Art was probably his most skillful follower, who also painted similar themes as Ravi Varma. (see plates 6 and 7) Cashing in on the newly awakened taste for the luscious H. Majumdar of Bengal (during 20's) and Thakur Singh of Punjab (during 30's) painted frankly erotic representations of Indian women, reproductions of which were sold in the form of "charming Indian graces" cleverly titled with dual meanings "Uncut Diamond" (for the unconsumed virgin) and "Wild Flower" (for the nude belle emerging out of the village pond).<sup>20</sup> (see plate 9)

Quite distinct from this kind of idealized sensuous painting was the kind of painting which was fostered by the art schools at Calcutta and Bombay, the best period of which is the last decade of the 19th and first and second decades of the 20th century, which can be characterised as "straight" naturalistic. The artist drew or painted as skillfully as he could in oils or water-colour either from a posed model in the case of a human figure or a chosen motif in the case of a landscape with no historical, religious or allegorical pretensions. Abalal Rahman, Pithawala, Pestonjee Bomanjee in Bombay and J. P. Ganguly in Calcutta are some of the noteworthy of this class. In the case of J. P. Ganguly certain of his paintings seem inspired by the type of paintings of rustic subjects which were done by Millet and his followers in France.<sup>21</sup> (see plates 4 and 8)

### **Archaeological excavations, discovery of the ancient arts and their interpretation**

The cult of the picturesque (discussed on page 24) has been especially beneficial to India for it is the men from this background who initiated the first efforts which lead towards the discovery of India's past. Archaeology for modern India has a much deeper significance more than as a mere scientific discipline. It is through archaeology India has been able to rediscover herself, her long lost identity and re-establish her obliterated links with a great past. And what is more, it has provided her with a vast and impressive material making her proudly conscious of a past replete with great achievements and hopeful of a future worthy of that past.<sup>22</sup>

Probing India's past through archaeological material began in the late 18th century through what are known as antiquarians—a dedicated band of British and European scho-



lars—beginning with the study of ancient sanskrit texts from religious, philosophical and linguistic angles and recording of ancient edifices and remains during the Governor Generalship of Warren Hastings.<sup>23</sup> Sir William Jones was the greatest pioneer of these antiquarian efforts. Puisne judge of the Calcutta Supreme Court, he brought together a band of enthusiastic antiquarians to form on 15th January 1784 the Asiatic Society for enquiring into the History, the Antiquities, Arts, Sciences and literatures of Asia and co-ordinating all and varied antiquarian efforts. For this purpose a journal was started in 1788 and a Museum set up in 1814 to house objects collected by the society's growing band of workers. Soon in Madras and Bombay literary societies were formed on the pattern of the Asiatic Society.

William Jones himself made English translations of Kalidasa's *Shakuntala* (1789) and *Rtusamhara* (1792) and of *Manusmriti*, the most important legal literature of ancient India.<sup>24</sup> It was the German translation of *Shakuntala* by George Forster in 1791, which attracted the attention of Herder and Goethe. Many translations and editing of sanskrit texts were carried out by Henry Colebrooke. Alexander Hamilton during his imprisonment by Napoleon in 1802, trained a group of Europeans in Sanskrit which included German scholar and poet Friedrich Schlegel who wrote an epoch making work "On the language and wisdom of the Indians" containing long excerpts from *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. In Germany, philosophers like Kant and Schopenhauer, were inspired by Indian thought. By mid-nineteenth century scholarship in Sanskrit had achieved a great prestige resulting in many philological works, dictionaries and grammars. During 1849-75 Max-Muller carried out the monumental project of editing and translation of *R̥g-Veda*.

The Antiquarians brought together vast epigraphic and numismatic material which enable to recreate India's past history and establish positive dates for the first time like the synchronism of Chandra Gupta Maurya with Alexander the great which was the brilliant discovery of Jones himself. Various scripts, other than Sanskrit, e.g. Kutila, taken from Asokan inscriptions and those of later periods, were transcribed and deciphered. Discoveries were made of Buddhist Stupas at Sarnath and Bodh Gaya, Kanheri Caves (1806), Elephanta (1813), Mahabalipuram (1772, 1788) and Amaravati. Material was unearthed from Afghanistan relating to Indo-Scythians. Measurements and descriptions of various Muslim monuments were carried out at Bijapur, Qutab Minar and Feroz Shah Fort. A leading personality of architectural measurements and plans was Colin Mackenzie (1753-1821).

James Princep (Assay Master, Calcutta Mint from 1832-1840) who as Secretary of the Asiatic Society, initiated the programme of analytical and interpretative research of antiquarian material and first systematic excavations in the field. During 1833-34, Kushans were discovered through coins and sculptures. Kharoshti and Brahmi scripts were unlocked and several Hellenistic kings identified. James Fergusson specialized in classification of architectural styles. His architectural surveys are contained in illustrations of 'Rock-cut temples of India' (London, 1845).



Through Alexander Cunningham's persuasion was established the first archaeological survey on government level (1861), till then the efforts had been on individual initiative. He undertook extensive surveys of whole of northern India following the trail of Chinese pilgrims Hiuen-Tsang and Fa-Hien and discovered among others the city of Taxila, Sravasti and Kausambi and the Bharhut Stupa. Contemporary were the investigations of Robert Foote relating to the prehistoric remains in South India. Magnificent survey operations were carried out by Rajendralala Mitra in Orissa between 1868-1869 described in two monumental volume, "Antiquities of Orissa". James Burgess, known as "Architectural Archaeologist" filled Cunningham's place after his retirement. At first he concentrated on Western India—Kathiawad, Dabhoi, Cambay, Belgaum, and later on South India—Amaravati, Jaggayapeta, Challukian and Pallava temples.

Curzon (1899-1905) had great enthusiasm for Indian archaeology who was awakened to it by the provocative writings of European Indologists, George Buhler and Hoernle. It was for the first time the chief administrator of the British Indian Government was personally interested in the history, culture and art of the subject nation. He reconstituted the Archaeological Survey, declared it as a central subject, controlled by the Imperial Government and headed by a Director General with the aim of excavation, conservation and preservation. He also promulgated the important Ancient Monuments Preservation Act.

In 1901 John Marshal was appointed Director General (till 1924). Epoch making during his time was the discovery of Indus Valley sites which suddenly made India among the oldest civilizations on earth revealing the ties that the Indian subcontinent had with the ancient Near-Eastern cultures. The systematic diggings in Gandhara region brought together a lot of material enabling a better grasp of the relationship with Parthians and Greeks. Aural Stein's great expeditions of Chinese Turkestan and the wealth of material brought from Tan Huang, including wall paintings and numerous written records, threw light on spread of Buddhism from India into China, the relation between central Asia and northern India and stimulating serious interest in ancient Central Asian history and culture.

Copies of Ajanta frescoes were made by Griffiths during 1880's (then principal of Bombay School of Art) and again in 1910 Lady Herringham sent a team of artists there.<sup>25</sup> Serious study of miniature paintings, generally termed as Hindu-Persian during the 19th century, was initiated by Havell and Percy Brown (around 1900) who associated many of them with the times of various Mughal rulers, thus the term Mughal painting was coined.<sup>26</sup> Coomaraswamy, following on their heels, did the work of sorting out various schools of Rajput painting, pointing out to the fundamental differences between this and the Mughal.<sup>27</sup> He also convincingly proved that Indian painting had a long and continuous tradition right from ancient times. First collection of Indian miniatures was formed by Havell during the early years of this century at the Indian Museum, Calcutta.<sup>28</sup> Soon Tagores began to collect, so also Raikrishna Das of Banaras. Coomaraswamy also began bringing together a collection now at Boston. He also helped Lawrence Binyon in bringing together Indian miniatures for the British Museum.<sup>29</sup> The uphill task of a proper aesthetic evaluation



of Indian painting and sculpture in the context of religion, philosophy and social set up of the country was due to the painstaking and untiring crusades of Havell and Coomaraswamy who had to fight strongly biased Victorian attitudes to Indian art and to art in general.<sup>30</sup>

### Surveys and revival of Indian handicrafts

The Victorians however had an eye for the quality and workmanship of crafts. This was the consequence of the Gothic Revival and the great favour with which medieval art was being looked at during the middle of the 19th century. Britain and all of Europe had woken up to the qualities of Indian art manufacturers when they were for the first time exhibited at the Great Exhibition in 1851 which according to Birdwood "descended upon us in Hyde Park, like an apparition out of the heaven. The supreme sensation it created being due to its revelation of the fact that in India Antiquity still survived on into our Modernity; and not in its ruins, as in Mesopotamia and as in Egypt, but as a living force, predestined to prove a commanding example in the revival of all the sumptuary arts of life."<sup>31</sup>

Birdwood had spent many years in India especially between 1857 and 1869 in Bombay. He had written a report on the Indian Court of the British Section of the International Exhibition held in 1877 in Paris. This report was expanded and republished in 1880 as "Industrial Arts of India" as the first major study of its kind on the occasion of the establishment of Indian Museum of Art Manufacturers at South Kensington (now Indian section of Victoria and Albert Museum) from the items collected for the above mentioned 1851 and 1877 International Exhibitions. Although supremely indifferent to traditional Indian painting and sculpture which he consistently refused to recognize as fine art, in spite of his seventy years contact with India, he was a staunch supporter of Indian crafts. He successfully persuaded the British Government to instruct the Imperial administration to take up earnestly the matter of preservation and development of Indian art manufacturers.<sup>32</sup>

A major exhibition of Indian manufactures assembling together various objects from many parts of India was held at Jaipur in 1883 (known as Jeypore Exhibition of 1883) patronized by the Maharaja. It was organized by a committee headed by T. H. Hendley and assisted among others by J. Griffiths and J. L. Kipling, principals of art schools at Bombay and Lahore respectively. They selected things, which were strictly Indian, sorting out those of poor quality as well as inferior versions of European objects, with the purpose of bringing together specimens of local manufactures (i) to instruct and amuse people (ii) to present to craftsmen selected examples of the best art work of India in the hope that they would profit thereby (iii) that visitors may know what is produced and available (iv) and finally that government may know what steps are required for their improvement.<sup>33</sup>

These surveys and exhibitions made the decay of Indian art manufactures glaringly clear, which had already set in due to the free flow of cheaper European machine-made goods greatly in demand by the indigenous population. Craftsmen were forced to compromise by producing things of poor design and material or cheap versions of European objects.



Certain kinds of techniques were being altogether given up for want of support and of improved implements.

In 1883, at Calcutta the Revenue and Agriculture Department of the Imperial Government, passed a Resolution on Museums and Exhibitions with regard to the improvement of art manufactures of India and promotion of trade in them within India itself as well as in foreign countries.<sup>34</sup> Instead of restricting the inflow of foreign goods by imposing tariff barriers they made recommendations which however resulted in some laudable activities. It was decided to arrange a large annual exhibition at Calcutta and to collect material for Indian sections at International Exhibitions. Provincial committees were to take up surveys of art manufactures under the chairmanship of the Principal of the Art School of the Province. Materials collected were to be housed in Museums to serve as "sample rooms." A journal, profusely illustrated, was set up, called *Journal of Indian Art*, which started issuing from 1883 under the editorship of J. L. Kipling, consisting of complete series of historical descriptions and illustrated by typical examples. These surveys are models of their kind in their thoroughness. The journal was also expected to serve as a medium of keeping in touch with European museums and manufacturers. The last major exhibition of Indian arts and crafts was held at 1902 at the Delhi Durbar initiated by Lord Curzon. The handbook for it prepared by Watts is a thorough index of regionwise Indian handicrafts.<sup>35</sup> The Tagore brothers during the second and third decade of this century had made it a major activity of the Indian Society of Oriental Art to collect and arrange exhibitions of Indian arts and crafts.<sup>36</sup>

### **Establishment of Art Schools**

Strangely enough the 1883 resolution regarding the improvement of Indian art manufactures did not refer to the training of craftsmen and designers and the role art schools were expected to play. For, by that time four schools of art had been functioning at Bombay, Madras, Calcutta and Lahore. It seems that the colonial government had no direct hand in introducing art education in India which was as a result of private initiative and collaboration between some enlightened Indians and company officials, probably inspired by the success of Indian crafts at the Great Exhibition of 1851. By 1880 the Government had taken over the administration of art schools and their function was spelled as "to maintain, restore and improve the application of oriental art to industry and manufacture."<sup>37</sup> Cultivation of fine arts had been relegated to a secondary aim. Yet on the whole the British policy towards art teaching in India remained wavery and anomalous which was emphatically brought out during a surprisingly thorough and frank debate held in 1909 at a Royal Society of Arts meeting in London in which the principal speaker had been E. B. Havell.<sup>38</sup>

Art education in India did not grow as a part of our tradition as in Europe. Its transplantation without a clear cut programme on the basis of the British pattern of art school teaching prevailing there during the mid-nineteenth century has had far reaching implications not properly understood and analysed again since then. What was happening in





the art schools and what was taught in them are inextricably connected with the art produced since their inception as most artists have been receiving their training in these institutions. Therefore a review of art education should form an unavoidable part in any account of Indian art since mid-nineteenth century.

The English men who invariably headed the art schools may have been efficient administrators but not always artists and teachers with a clear vision. The formulation of curricula and methods of instruction were entirely left to the mercy of their idiosyncracies. There was no attempt to learn from experience, to evolve methods with a definite end in view as it happened in Europe, indeed, even in England subsequently. There was no constant reviewing of the situation and introducing inevitable changes and modifications after periodical assessment in terms of advanced pedagogical and aesthetic principles. It can be claimed that such a situation had harmful influences, polluting the Indian taste and inherent sense of pattern and petrifying the Indian imagination.

### *Madras*

The first formal art teaching class was established by Dr. Hunter in 1850 as a private institution in Madras "with the object of improving the taste of the native public as regards beauty of form and finish in the articles in daily use among them."<sup>39</sup> It was rather a minor drawing academy where had also been brought together a small collection of copies of European oil paintings on government expense with the persuasion of Dr. Hunter.<sup>40</sup> In 1876, when he left Madras the question came up whether it should be closed or continued. Robert Chisholm, the consulting architect of Madras Presidency, transformed it into an architect's workshop for his draftsmen. He thought the effort to awaken artistic taste among Indians through the examples of European realism to be futile for he had found to his dismay that the cause of the popularity among the native students of a certain painting, depicting a recumbent figure of Venus in the nude, was its being the picture of "a naked English lady."<sup>41</sup> In 1884, Havell, the new Principal, tried his best to establish it essentially as a school for craftsmen, introducing study of Indian designs and decorative patterns.<sup>42</sup>

### *Bombay*

In Bombay some drawing classes formed the nucleus of a proposed National Art School when in 1854, Sir Jamshetjee Jeejeebhoy offered Rs. 1,00,000/- to the Directors of the East India Company as endowment for establishing the institution.<sup>43</sup> To begin with classes were held for a few hours daily. Later on hours of the school were increased, professors brought out from England, workshops and studios built, the building of which went on till 1878.<sup>44</sup> In that year Lockwood Kipling, who had been its first Superintendent when Government took it over, left for Lahore to establish another school there. Lockwood Kipling was primarily a modeller but while in Punjab was to undertake several surveys of Indian crafts. In his time instruction was given in drawing, modelling, painting and metal work. He had two other English colleagues to assist him, Griffiths and Higgins. A separate workshop for the manufacture of pottery had been established by Terry, who became the head of the institution after Kipling, as a business venture, later on merged with the art

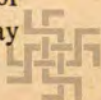


school to form one of its crafts sections. Here right from preparing the raw material to glazing, decoration etc. were taught. The decorating and glazing was done by a man from Multan. Lectures were given in chemistry, geology etc. as applied to ceramics. Terry taught freehand drawing from copies, outline from foliage, outline from cast, light and shade from ornament, and from the round, Perspective and Geometry.<sup>45</sup> Advance students were taught painting a head from the life or a draped figure. Terry also introduced the teaching of wood engraving.

When Griffiths took charge in 1880 (remained Principal till 1895) he instituted a regular course of drawing on the model of South Kensington.<sup>46</sup> With the assistance of his vice-principal, Greenwood, a system of graded examinations was introduced, Ist IInd and IIIrd, leading to Higher Art. Successful students were eligible for the posts of Drawing teachers, in the Government and Aided Schools, where drawing had been introduced as one of the subjects. The Principal himself had to be a practising artist. Griffiths' scheme of teaching included principles of light and shade, advance study of outline (from the cast and from nature), advanced perspective and solid geometry.<sup>47</sup> But Griffiths is best remembered as an enthusiast of Indian art and his compendious monograph on the Ajanta caves. The whole project extended over 12 years with the principal dividing his time between Bombay and Ajanta. The expeditionary party was headed by Pestonjee Bomanjee and M. V. Dhurandhar was one of the young students who worked at Ajanta.<sup>48</sup>

Unfortunately Griffiths' successors, Cecil Burns (1898 to c. 1915) and Gladstone Solomon (c. 1915 onward), did not share their predecessor's enthusiasm for Indian Art. Cecil Burns strongly believed that Indian handicrafts were dead as that of Greeks and saw no future in them.<sup>49</sup> He had introduced the subject of architecture in the syllabus and claimed that under his supervision, the drawing, painting and architecture students had copied most of the finest monuments of the past in Western India, of which they had prepared many sketches, models and measured drawings.<sup>50</sup> Also trained draftsmen were supplied to all government departments.

With Solomon there had been a complete shift from the concern with improving of Indian handicrafts to producing minor counterparts of French or British art school products. He scoffed at the attempts to "return to the flat and archaic conventions of some of past phase of Art"<sup>51</sup> and laid great stress on learning to draw well with proper understanding of proportion and tone values and in skilful use of various media. This for him represented 'the grammar of the universal language of art' and justified its Indianness thus: "It is the message which the students have to deliver when they have acquired that language that differs from that of their comrades in the West."<sup>52</sup> When he introduced the Mural class in 1919-20, it was to enable a further opening to the art students who could be employed to decorate Government and private buildings with wall paintings. Only such students could enter this class who could delineate any natural object whether Historical, Decorative or Idealistic. Yet Solomon had the temerity to claim for him the initiator of "the Bombay Revival of Indian Art."<sup>53</sup>





He and Percy Brown, Solomon's counterpart in Calcutta at the time, were the chief protagonists of teaching art in India on the basis of Western realistic techniques. Percy Brown (formerly principal of Mayo School of Art, Lahore), who took over the charge of the Calcutta School of art in 1909, successfully reversed many of the reforms and reorganizations that his predecessor E. B. Havell had brought about in the teeth of great opposition.

### *Calcutta*

The art school at Calcutta, had been established in 1854 as a private enterprise by a number of distinguished Indians and British Officers of the Company, who formed themselves into a society under the name of the Industrial Art Society.<sup>54</sup> The institution was called School of Industrial Arts. Justice Hodgson Pratt and Rajendralala Mitra were the Secretaries of the Society. Colonel E. Goodwyn (Company's Engineer) was its President, who had in a lecture, "Union of Science, Industry and Art", delivered in 1854, urged the necessity of establishing an institution for teaching youth of all classes industrial art based on scientific methods.<sup>55</sup> Instructors were invited from England to teach clay modelling, painting and the techniques of Engraving, Etching and Lithography. At a later stage instructions were also given in Photography.

In 1864, Government was persuaded to take it over after convincing itself of its utility. H. H. Locke was selected from England to become its first fullfledged principal.<sup>56</sup> He prepared a comprehensive scheme of curriculum of studies and also included the subject of Design for manufacture, the instructions in which required freehand outline drawing of flowers, foliage, ornament and human figures. To justify the utility of the school, advanced students were assigned to design and execute illustrations for diverse kinds of projects e.g. (i) Richardson's book, *The Indian Handbook of Gardening* (ii) Dr. Fayrer's *Thanatophidia of India*, a standard book on Indian snakes and (iii) a series of 433 anatomical and surgical diagrams for the Medical College.<sup>57</sup> Most important however was regarded the work of making casts and drawings of architectural and sculptural fragments and decorative motifs. e.g. for the survey of Orissa antiquities undertaken by Rajendralala Mitra, published in two illustrated volumes in 1870. For these outside commissions students were receiving remunerations which the authorities considered would serve as inducements for attracting natives to this profession.

By the time Locke died in 1886, he had accomplished the following: (i) enlisted several senior students on the staff, one of whom was Annoda Prasad Bagchi, later on to become Head Teacher, expert in Lithography and accomplished painter in oils (ii) introduction of drawing in high schools so that students trained at the art school were eligible to teach there (iii) establishment of an Art Gallery attached to the school which was approved by then Viceroy, Lord Northbrook, in 1876.<sup>58</sup> Funds were made available for purchasing paintings from Europe. Justice Princep helped to procure a number of pictures from England. B. C. Mullick donated some money and Viceroy himself gave away pictures as gift from his own collection. The superintendent was concurrently designated as the keeper of the Art Gallery.



When Havell took over in 1896, the art school and the gallery had moved over to its new and commodious premises near the Indian Museum. By then the pattern of the School was set, it was characterised properly speaking a "School of Art" as it had no manufacturing industrial side since indigenous art in Bengal was thought to be non-existent.<sup>59</sup>

Havell had nearly a decade of experience as the head of Madras School of Art. During this period his services had been requisitioned by the government for enquiry into arts and manufactures of different provinces of the country which had given him enough insight into them. He was not happy at the state of instruction in the school. He observed : "The study of design, the foundation of all art, was entirely ignored and throughout the general drawing and painting classes, the worst traditions of the English provincial art school forty years ago, were followed. There were no general classes for practical geometry, mechanical drawing and perspective. Oriental art was more or less ignored, thereby taking the Indian art students in a wrong direction. There was, besides, no regular examination system for the issue of certificates to deserving students."<sup>60</sup> He was not happy either with regard to the New Regulations that had been promulgated dividing the school in two distinct divisions viz. (i) Industrial Art and (ii) Fine Arts.

In order to correct the situation he proposed to make oriental art as the basis of all instruction in Division I. For this purpose he started procuring specimens of industrial Art for the art gallery to serve as examples. The art Gallery was reorganized in three sections (i) Art applied to industry, (ii) Architecture and architectural decoration and (iii) Fine Arts. For Section III for the first time some fine paintings of Mughal period were purchased.

He also introduced several new craft techniques, viz. fresco decoration for walls, stained glass windows, lacquer work and stencilling so as to open out a wide remunerative employment for students. The problem was upper most in his mind that students who pass the school should continue to practise as artists and craftsmen which could happen only if they were in a position to earn a livelihood by what they had been taught.

Although he let the teaching of figure and nature study continue in the Fine Arts Section, here too he thought direct acquaintance of Indian examples would be beneficial. So, in 1903, when he returned from London, after a year's furlough leave, he vigorously pleaded for disbanding the European pictures and to replace them with fresh purchases of Indian painting. He stated in a report "The object of having an art gallery attached to an art school is to mould the taste and direct the imagination of the students by means of the works of art exhibited and yet though the students were Indian and the object of the school was, or rather should have been, the improvement of Indian Art and not the introduction of European art, the collection of pictures which was got together for the art gallery consisted almost entirely of copies of the old Italian and early English school, while Indian art was practically ignored."<sup>61</sup>

In 1904 with the approval of Lord Curzon the European paintings were sold and a fullfledged Indian art gallery established. His reorganizations and changes provoked strong



criticism by the public and press, even a section of students protested against this reverting back to Indian art. To strengthen his hands and to attract students from well to do and educated families he persuaded Abanindranath Tagore to join the staff and secured for him the post of Vice-Principal in 1905.<sup>62</sup> This post was held by Ghilardi, his own teacher some years back, who died in that year. But Havell was not to be able to complete his scheme of reorganization because his career was cut short by mental breakdown forcing him to take leave. He never returned back since, in 1908, while in London, he was declared permanently unfit for service in India.<sup>63</sup>

Abanindranath served at the school till 1915 when he resigned due to strong differences with the new principal Percy Brown, reportedly on the question of student discipline.<sup>64</sup> Abanindranath established the teaching of Indian art in the Fine Arts department which attracted many students. The batch who later become famous as practitioners and propagators of Bengal School, included Surendranath Ganguly, Nandalal Bose, Asit Kumar Haldar, Samarendranath Gupta, Shailendranath Dey, Hakim Md. Khan, Venkatappa, Promode Kumar Chakravarty etc. They became heads of the several new art schools which had been opened at different places in the country. Nandalal at Shantiniketan, Asit Kumar Haldar at Lucknow, Samarendranath Gupta at Lahore, Shailendranath Dey at Jaipur, Venkatappa at Mysore and so on. 1905-1915 is the phase of the Calcutta art school when it was closely associated with the revival of Indian painting (the Bengal school painters at that time were known as of the Calcutta school) and from about 1920 onwards ushered a new phase of art teaching supposedly based on Indian ideals. Abanindranath continued to teach privately under the auspices of the Indian Society of Oriental Art, while Shantiniketan remained a stronghold under the leadership of Nandalal Bose.

I am not sure if what was taught in the newly established sections of so-called "Indian Art" was exactly what Havell intended to be the solution and correct alternative to the South Kensington model. For the new Indian approach itself was replacement of one kind of academism with another with similar inherent pitfalls. While Havell severely criticized rendering of light and shade and so on he never spelled out what should take its place. But perhaps his primary interests were theoretical and he was essentially to prove to be an undaunted crusador. (see plate 10 as a specimen of his ability for decorative designing)

In 1909, already relieved of his job, he could fearlessly expose the disasters of the Government policy with regard to Indian art education.<sup>65</sup> The first attack was against the double standards with which the art manufactures and the traditional arts of painting and sculpture were viewed. He argued if Indian artistic genius had found expression in producing articles of beauty for domestic use how could they have failed in the case of "fine arts", as if they were guided by two separate aesthetic philosophies. He thought it illogical that Indians were asked to respect their handicrafts and look down upon their traditional painting and sculpture. How anomalous it was therefore to ask them to imbibe techniques of European art for cultivation of and improving their artistic taste and then to produce better handicraft of genuine Indian quality. He saw no possibility of revitaliza-



tion of Indian arts and crafts where there was no link between art schools and industry, when there were no opportunities made available to those passing from the art school to practise profitably the things they were taught. He lamented that art schools had neither been able to attract large number of students from families of hereditary craftsmen nor from nobler and educated families. He was most unhappy with the situation where the ambition of every student was to become eventually a portrait painter or sculptor and obtain prizes at the Simla Fine Arts Exhibition—Royal Academy of Anglo-India.<sup>66</sup>

These problems and dilemmas of art education in our country still remain unresolved. There is the rigidity and complacency prevailing in some of the older art schools accumulated through a century of their function. The questions of designing for handicrafts on one hand and for industrial products on the other have assumed their own contradictions today. And teaching for creative artists has itself become complicated enough due to the constant fluctuations of art trends and aesthetic standpoints.



## FAMILY BACKGROUND AND OTHER BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

### The Tagore clan

Tagores were brahmins whom the orthodox derisively called *pirili*, having lost their purity due to being in the service of Muslim rulers of Jessore in South Bengal. What is known today as the Tagore family was founded by Panchanan Keshari. Exile, misfortune and social persecution had made the descendants of the family defiant and adventurous. In the last decade of the 17th century Panchanan and his uncle settled down in a village called Govindpur on the banks of the Ganges not far from the British factory and trading centre. Govindpur (now a part of the teeming city of Calcutta) was at that time a small fishing village whose low caste inhabitants addressed him as Panchanan Thakur. Panchanan had found a lucrative occupation in supplying provisions to the foreign ships that sailed up the river. The British and foreigners pronounced the unfamiliar name as Tagore which they thought to be Panchanan's surname.

The prospering Tagores were soon to represent in their new destiny a fine fusion of the three strands of culture—Hindu, Muslim and Christian—which have made modern India what it is.<sup>1</sup> The fortunes of the family were from the beginning linked with the rise of the British power in India. "In a way the family may be said to be the first in India to perceive, dimly but surely, the revolutionary significance of the new age that was dawning in the country, the age of international commerce and capitalism, of industry and science, of a long period of tutelage under a foreign power that by depriving India of its native rule was paradoxically to create conditions of a new and fuller freedom."<sup>2</sup>

As British power and commerce grew, Calcutta became a prosperous metropolis and the fortunes of Tagore family grew with it. The descendants of Panchanan Thakur became merchant princes and landed aristocrats. The family fortune reached its peak in the life and career of Dwarkanath Tagore, grand-father of Rabindranath. Born in 1794, Dwarkanath was only 13 years old when his father died. Handsome, versatile, clever and enterprising, he was a romantic figure who in an earlier age would probably have carved out a kingdom for himself. He was popularly known as Prince Dwarkanath Tagore because of his magnificent way of living and his large public charities. His extensive business covered many fields, indigo factories, saltpetre, sugar, tea, coal mines etc. He owned large agricultural estates in Bengal and Orissa, a fleet of cargo boats that plied to the British coast, and founded the first modern bank with Indian capital, known as the Union Bank. All these multifarious concerns he controlled through his firm, Carr, Tagore and Co.



He lived lavishly and regally in the family mansion of the Jorasanko quarter of Calcutta. The aristocrats of those days lived a double life. At home in the joint family the orthodox and traditional ways of life were maintained. Outside the family quarters, there were spacious rooms and banquet halls hung with chandeliers where the master of the family entertained his friends and visitors, where the ornamented hookah was always ready with fragrant tobacco, where whisky flowed freely, where famous musicians displayed their virtuosity and the professional dancing girls their charms.<sup>3</sup>

He gave generously to many public institutions and causes. He helped in establishing the National Library in Calcutta, Hindu College (1816) and the first Medical College and hospital in Calcutta (1835) and gave free scholarships to encourage students to take up the study of medicine. He was the first Indian member and patron of Asiatic Society. In 1838 he founded the Landholders Society to represent the interests of the landed aristocracy. He stood up bravely for every social reform and progressive movement of his day, religious, social and political. In all this he was the faithful friend and supporter of Raja Ram Mohan Roy. He broke the taboo against sea-voyages by visiting England twice, in 1842 and again in 1844. In England, where he died during his second visit, he was held in high esteem by Queen Victoria and the nobility. He was also friendly with Louis Philippe of France, whom he entertained in Paris where he also met the Sanskrit scholar Buruouf and his pupil Max-Muller.<sup>4</sup>

Dwarkanath left behind three sons of whom the eldest was Debendranath, father of Rabindranath. Born in 1817, (died in 1905) Debendranath came to be known as a Maharshi. Although a pampered child brought up in luxury and pomp, he grew up into a brooding and introspective young man. He became god-intoxicated and was bothered with the questions of meaning of life and true religion. Renouncing worldly pleasures he devoted himself to religious reform, meditations and extensive travels in the Himalayan region. Once he almost decided not to return to his family but escapism was alien to his beliefs. He found out a way whereby he could perform his duties as the head of a large household and also satisfy his spiritual yearnings. He continued the work of Ram Mohan Roy and became his spiritual heir. He reorganized Ram Mohan's Brahma Sabha into Brahma Samaj turning the intellectual club into a vigorous movement of living and dynamic faith.

Rabindranath, 14th child, was born on 7th May, 1861, in a family where all the elder brothers and sisters and their families lived together in one joint household, which was swarmed with children and grand-children. The Maharshi, the father, had become more and more aloof, the mother was ailing and burdened with responsibilities of looking after the vast household. Rabi, like other children, instead of growing under direct parental care was relegated to the charge of servants. Under them Rabi had a strict and rather colourless childhood. But as he grew he began to feel the influence not only of his venerable father but also of his own illustrious elder brothers.





“The Jorasanko house was like a bee-hive where honey sucked from many flowers, wild and cultivated, was being gathered.”<sup>5</sup> Poets and scholars, musicians and philosophers, artists and social reformers, geniuses and cranks—they were all there in the family and more came in from outside. Dramas were written and acted inside the house and music was in the air. Bengal was in the ferment of early renaissance and new books and literary magazines carrying poems, serialized novels and translations from foreign literatures were achieving a popular response hitherto unknown. Young Rabi read voraciously whatever fell into his hands and listened eagerly to the compositions and conversations of his elders.

Dwijendranath (1840-1926), the eldest brother was a man of gigantic talent, poet, philosopher, musician and mathematician. He was versatile and had an inventive imagination but an utter lack of ambition. The second eldest brother, Satyendranath (1842-1923), was the first Indian to break into the stronghold of Indian Civil Service. He was a fine scholar of Sanskrit and translated many classics, Maharshi's Autobiography and later on Rabindranath's writings into English. Satyendranath introduced him to English life while he stayed with him in Western India and when Rabindranath was nineteen, he took him to England with him.

Jyotirindranath (1849-1925), 5th son of Devendranath, was a genius of uncommon versatility and one of the most accomplished men of his age.<sup>6</sup> Handsome, elegant and daring, he was a Prince charming of the Indian renaissance and a pioneer in almost every field. Musician, composer, poet, dramatist and artist of remarkable sensibility, his overflowing energy and ardent nationalism led him into many adventures far beyond the range of the arts and letters. He strove to break the British monopoly of shipping and industry and nearly ruined himself financially in the process. His influence on the intellectual and poetic development of his younger and more famous brother, who was thirteen years his junior, was considerable and has been gratefully acknowledged by the latter.<sup>7</sup> It would hardly be an exaggeration to say that evidence of Jyotirindranath's genius is to be seen only partly in his own individual achievements; in part it lies hidden in the great fulfilment of his brother's powers.

Jyotirindranath and his wife Kadambari devi poured their affection on him and gave to this motherless boy a home in their little household as he had never known before. Kadambari devi, only slightly older than Rabindranath, became his playmate as a teenager whose admiration he craved most. Herself interested in literature and poetry, she would listen to his poetic efforts but never lavish praise so as to check his conceit from growing.

While Kadambari devi supplied the emotional stimulus and the caressing warmth and shade, which he needed most at the age, it was her husband, Jyotirindranath who gave the first necessary discipline and direction to his nebulous and unformed talent. Himself at the peak of his creative powers, Jyotirindranath took the young brother under his wing and made him an apprentice in the workshop of his genius. He sat at the piano and made Rabi



sing; he composed new melodies as his hands strayed over the keyboard and encouraged his young brother to improvise verses to fit the tune; he read to him the first drafts of his dramas and gave him confidence by incorporating in them Rabi's suggestions and even compositions; he staged these dramas and made his brother act in them. He took him on tours to the family estates at Shelidah in north-east Bengal where he taught him riding. He was also made to accompany him on his tiger-hunting expeditions.

Jyotirindranath's incorrigible romanticism led him to incredible adventures. He had organized a secret society, called "Sanjivani Sahba", in which his younger brother also joined. Their aim was the political liberation of India and it was modelled after Mazzini's *carbonari*. This stimulated in young Rabindranath the passionate concern for his nation's freedom. The restless Jyotirindranath also started a literary monthly named *Bharati*, with his eldest brother Dwijendranath, the philosopher-poet, as editor. Like everything else he put his hand to, this magazine blazed a new trail in Bengali literature. Later, in Calcutta, Rabindranath assisted Jyotirindranath in founding the first Literary Academy in India and collaborated with him in his efforts to enlarge and equip the Bengali language as an adequate instrument of modern thought, particularly scientific thought.

### **Multifarious genius of Rabindranath<sup>8</sup>**

Rabindranath grew up into one of the pre-eminent individuals who gave a creative direction to the forces responsible in shaping the destiny of India. Though he was essentially a poet, he was more than a mere poet in the Western sense of the term. He was a poet in the traditional Indian sense of the word, Kavi, a seer, an intermediary between the human and the divine. His genius enriched whatever it touched. He gave to his people in one life time what normally takes centuries to evolve, a language capable of expressing the finest modulations of thought and feeling, a literature worthy to be taught in any university in the world. There is hardly a field of literary activity which was not explored and made fruitful by his daring adventures. He is a unique poet in that not only sophisticated intellectuals delight in his verse and prose but the simple unlettered folk in the remote villages of Bengal sing his songs with rapture.

His main significance lies in the impulse and direction he gave to the course of India's cultural and moral development, and in the example he presented of a genius passionately devoted to his art and no less passionately dedicated to the service of his people and of humanity in general. He gave us faith in our own languages and in our cultural and intellectual heritage. The contemporary renaissance in Indian languages is due largely to his inspiration and example. His manysided genius and his almost missionary zeal for the development of the Indian arts, whether it is dancing or music or painting or the handicrafts, and his fostering of both the classical and the folk traditions in his school at Shantiniketan provided a stimulus and a prestige to these arts which has enabled them to survive and to flower.

He was a pioneer in the field of education. For the last forty years of his life, he was content to be a school master in humble rural surroundings, even when he had achieved





fame such as no Indian had known before. He was first, in India, to think out for himself and put in practice principles of education which are now commonplaces of educational theory, if not yet of practice. He laid great store on what and how the child was taught. Mahatma Gandhi adopted the scheme of teaching through crafts many years after Tagore had worked it out at Shantiniketan. The earliest experiments in what is today known as Community Development were conducted by Rabindranath, first among the peasants of his own estates, later in the institute which he founded for this purpose and named Sriniketan.

Though Tagore was a great patriot, he hated agitational politics. He never felt comfortable when he found himself in the shoes of a political leader briefly during the Swadeshi movement and quickly shunned such a role. Yet he wrote many patriotic songs shorn of jingoism which were even on the lips of young freedom fighters on their way to the gallows. He took up the cause of national reconstruction in practical and creative terms so that he could meet the politician on his own ground.

Tagore was not a narrow nationalist. He, who taught us to cherish and take pride in our own heritage, also gave us the courage and the example to break the fetters of tradition. He thought conforming to a conventional type to be a sign of immaturity. One must outgrow the fixed pattern and blind loyalty to tradition which breed inertia but respond to the stimulus from outside, no matter from where it comes so that the individual personality has the chance of full growth. He talked of a world "not broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls". These aspects of Rabindranath's character may also be particularly noted in connection with his painting activity.

He was an internationalist and saw the possibilities of forging one world, for preaching the values of which he went from country to country, of Asia, Europe and America. But he was ignored as a lone visionary and was ridiculed for the very largeness of his sympathies. He was neither a mystic nor a religious saint as he has often been misconstrued. He was human and humane. "The religion he preached was the religion of man, the renunciation he extolled was not of this world but of the base passions of cupidity and hatred, the freedom he fought for, was not of one people to exploit another but the freedom of the human personality from all that strangles it, whether it be the tyranny of an external organization or the worse tyranny of man's own blind passion for power."<sup>9</sup>

### **Gaganendranath's branch of the Tagore Family**

The grandfather of Gaganendranath and Abanindranath was Girindranath (1820-1854), the second son of Prince Dwarkanath (father of Rabindranath, Debendranath, was the first son). This branch of Tagore family had an innate inclination towards painting, drama and other cultural pursuits. Girindranath was himself a painter of considerable merit and used to paint portraits and landscapes after the European style.<sup>10</sup> He made copies of the oil paintings in the Belgachia Garden House gallery. He had for his collaborator Dr. Gouri Shanker, the first Indian painter of note in oils. Girindranath was also a dramatist and musician. He composed many songs and Jatrappays and was a friend of the well-known Bengali poet, Ishwar Chandra Gupta. Radha Prasad Roy, the eldest



son of Ram Mohan Roy was also a great friend of Girindranath. His favourite past-time was to sail out in his boat on the Ganges when the sky was overcast with clouds, and a storm was threatening, to the accompaniment of music with drums.

Gunendranath (1847-1881) was the youngest son of Girindranath. Like his father he too was a man of varied talents and died very young. He took a keen interest in photography, botany, gardening as well as in zoological and other scientific studies.<sup>11</sup> He had won many prizes for his rare plants and flowers in Horticultural exhibitions. His house was a veritable zoo with many varieties of birds especially parrots and pigeons put up in elaborate cages made by Chinese carpenters.<sup>12</sup> Also there were caged rabbits and squirrels, monkeys and deer and a large aquarium containing red fishes.

He had given history lessons to young Rabindranath and also encouraged his poetic ventures. This is how Rabindranath remembered him later :

“He.....kept the house filled with his personality. His large gracious heart embraced alike relatives, friends, guests and dependents. Whether in his broad south verandah, or on the lawn by the fountain, or at the tank edge on the fishing platform, he presided over self-invited gatherings, like hospitality incarnate. His wide appreciation of art and talent kept him constantly radiant with enthusiasm. New ideas of festivity or frolic, theatricals or other entertainments, found in him a ready patron, and with his help would flourish and find fruition.”<sup>13</sup>

In 1867, he established for the first time the family theatre of the Tagore household (called Jorasanko Theatre) in collaboration with his elder brother Ganendranath (1841-1869).<sup>14</sup> Only relations and intimate friends of Tagore family could take part in its performances. The first play produced by it was Naba Natak by Ramnarayan Tarkaratna.

This play was selected by Ishwarchandra Vidya Sagar and Rajkrishna Banerjee at the request of the Committee of the Jorasanko Theatre. The play was staged nine times, the first time on January 5, 1867, in the large hall which served as the drawing room of Girindranath Tagore. The National Paper of February 6, 1867, wrote about this performance :

“We are glad to notice the return of old days of friendship, love and union amongst Europeans and Natives. Of late there have been a good number of social gatherings where both the classes united very freely and cordially. The latest one was that held at the house of Baboo Gonendro Mohan Tagore on the occasion of a performance of the Nobo-Natuck. Many respectable European and native gentlemen were present. Baboo Ganendro Mohan Tagore, Barrister at law, entertained the whole party with lively conversation.”<sup>15</sup>

In 1864, Gunendranath and Jyotirindranath (an elder brother of Rabindranath) were together students of the Calcutta Art School where they studied art for a few years.<sup>16</sup> Gunendranath developed a special flare for making architectural drawings and colouring them up. The monuments of Agra, Delhi and Golden Temple of Amritsar fascinated him greatly which he visited on several occasions spending a great deal of time in making sketches





of cornices, pillars and jallis. He owned a house at Kon Nagar on the bank of Ganges with a large garden. On the other side of the bank was Jyotirindranath's house. Gunendranath had a boat which would be used to cross to and fro. Often they would signal to each other through pistol shots.<sup>17</sup> Thus, it appears that the two were very intimate with each other and it can be observed that Gunendranath had much in common with Jyotirindranath not only in the varied nature of his interests but also in the fastidiousness with which he pursued them.

He had acquired a garden house at Champdani. It had been an old rambling mansion standing on a large tract of land with a garden that had overgrown into a veritable jungle where animals and birds had made comfortable homes for themselves. He set out an elaborate programme of reconstructing the house and laying out the garden for which he prepared his own designs with the help of George Edward (with whom he had collaborated in designing Maharshi Debendranath's house). He planted many trees and flowers, put up green houses, vegetable beds, ponds, deer park, horse and cattle shed and bird cages. Garden sculpture was ordered from England. An elaborate fountain was purchased which had been exhibited in one of the International Exhibitions in Europe. When the reconstruction was completed a huge party on a lavish scale was thrown, one in Indian style and one in European style. The guests stayed on for several days. Musicians were also there. Rabindranath was present and recited some songs.<sup>18</sup> It was soon after this party in 1881 Gunendranath died at the age of 34 when his two sons were 14 and 10 respectively.

As a child Abanindranath also remembered a particular room in the vast house of his father which remained closed most of the time and had been an object of special curiosity for him. It used to be opened once every morning when a servant would come to dust and Abanindranath would wait like a hunter to go in and inspect. This room contained all sorts of things of different shapes and colours, lamps, chandeliers, flower vases, which were once in fashion.<sup>19</sup>

From all these accounts Gunendranath sounds like a highly westernized and cultured aristocrat preoccupied most of the time with his own pursuits and lavish entertaining of friends and guests which included many British residents of Calcutta. It was amidst such an environment the two brothers passed their childhood days. They could not have remained unaffected by the cultivated and many-sided personality of their father.

#### **Abanindranath and Gaganendranath**

The account that Abanindranath (born 1871) has given of his childhood reads almost like that of Rabindranath—the strictness enforced through the servants under whose charge they were most of the time, the father keeping a watchful eye on their upbringing while the children having sporadic chances to meet him. Abanindranath could not adjust to school life and so was educated at home by private tutors. He used to play about with his father's watercolours who had taught him how to draw huts, plants etc. He used to go often in his aunt's (father's sister) room where he saw reproductions of gods and goddesses and wished to be able to draw similar images himself. This he picked up finally



during his student days at Sanskrit College with the help of his class-mate, Anukul Chatterji.<sup>20</sup> His elder brothers, Gaganendranath and Samarendranath were receiving instructions at home in oil painting from Harinarayan. Gaganendranath was also learning painting at St. Xavier's school for which he won several prizes.<sup>21</sup>

The unusually reticent Gaganendranath (born 1867) has left no account of his childhood while strangely enough Abanindranath has hardly mentioned any significant thing about his elder brother in his several autobiographical narratives. It appears that Jyotirindranath became particularly fond of his cousin's eldest son, Gaganendranath, who was also drawn by him under his wing after the death of their father. Jyotirindranath had the habit of doing pencil sketches of the members of the family. There are hundreds of these pencil portraits in existence which were among the earliest influences on Gaganendranath's painting activity. About these drawings Rothenstein had observed: "I know of few drawings which show at the same time so much sensitiveness and sincerity in characterisation and there is a beauty and nobility in the expression you give to your sitters which it would be difficult to match."<sup>22</sup> Later Gaganendranath also made several portrait sketches of his uncle. Like in the case of his father, he too had ardently taken to photography in his youth.

As the two brothers grew up into adults they were always at hand to participate and collaborate in the activities initiated by Jyotirindranath and Rabindranath. Abanindranath began to learn music and played excellently on esraj. He was often sought after by Rabindranath to accompany him while he sang. He also took lessons in French. Rabindranath encouraged him to write though he felt diffident. The Poet told him to go ahead and offered to correct and guide his writings advising him to write as he would speak.<sup>23</sup> His early writings are *Khiner Putul* and *Raj Kahani* in which he established himself as an inimitable story teller in lyrical Bengali prose. Rabindranath had watched him with much interest when he established a studio in European fashion, north light and all that, where Ravi Varma is reported to have dropped in (in Abanindranath's absence) and remarked that he would have a great future.<sup>24</sup> At this time the Poet had asked him to illustrate his book of poems, *Chitrangada*, published in 1893. He also made illustrations for the following works of Rabindranath—*Gitanjali* and *Fruit Gathering* (1918), *The Parrot's Training* (1918). In 1911, Gaganendranath had been asked to make illustrations for the Poet's autobiography in Bengali, *Jeevansmriti* (1911). He also prepared illustrations for the play, *Red Orleanders*, published in *Vishwa Bharati Quarterly* during 1924 and designed the cover of its Bengali version (1925).

As Abanindranath matured, and through the inspiration of Havell, he turned his attention to critical interpretation of Indian art and aesthetic values using his knowledge of ancient Indian treatises and his own personal experiences as a painter. He thus became the first Indian painter to attempt a critical expounding of the artist's vision and aims in Eastern terms which he could do so articulately being a master of Bengali prose.<sup>25</sup> The meeting with Havell was a turning point in Abanindranath's life but it is not clear as to how



and in which year they came to know each other. Was it in the art club started by Havell at the Art School? They must have met between 1896 (when Havell arrived in Calcutta) and 1900 when he left for London for one year's furlough leave, armed with a handful of Abanindranath's paintings which were published in "Studio" of 1902 as part of an article Havell wrote on the new stirrings in art in Calcutta.<sup>26</sup> In it he has mentioned that he made Abanindranath's acquaintance when he was beginning to form a collection of Indian art for the Government Art Gallery.

Like their uncles both these brothers had great histrionic ability and invariably acted in the staging of Rabindranath's plays, some of which were put up in their house. The success of them was in no small measure to their setting, decor and costumes which was invariably their task.<sup>27</sup> The part of Raja would be specially chalked out for Gaganendranath and Abanindranath excelled in comic roles. From photographs we know both of them took part in *Dakghar* (1917) and *Phalguni* (1916). Earlier and other performances of Gaganendranath are not recorded. As a youth Abanindranath played a role in Jyotirindranath Tagore's *Alik Babu*, a farcical play now revived in Calcutta after many decades. He also acted in the following plays of Rabindranath: as a robber in *Valmiki-Prathibha*<sup>28</sup> (in which Rabindranath himself played Valmiki), as *Tinkari* in *Vaikunther Khata*, *Thakurda* in *Saradotsav* and on one occasion in *Raja O Rani*.

In 1905, they were all drawn into the protest against division of Bengal and in spreading the message of *Swadeshi*. Rabindranath initiated *Rakhibandhan* and composed the song on *Rakhi* which he sang at the head of a long mass procession.<sup>29</sup> Abanindranath painted the patriotic painting "*Bharat Mata*". At home they discarded all their European dresses, furniture and other traces of Victorian way of living. They adopted the famous *choga* which was designed by Gaganendranath. He and Abanindranath also designed furniture and arranged their rooms using indigenous material like grass-mats, coir and bamboo. "The style of indoor decoration invented by them became quite the fashion later on in Calcutta. But the acme of their joint efforts was reached in the drawing room—a magnificent example of semi-oriental treatment—decorated with the choicest collection of painting and art-ware, a room that has been the envy of connoisseurs from the world over."<sup>30</sup>

This room was the venue of many artistic *soirees* and the distinguished personalities who frequented here indicates the great prestige the Tagore brothers had earned as highly cultured and cultivated men. Rathindranath has recalled: "There would be a few lovers of art and music reclining in meditative poses on spacious divans, with lights dimmed, listening to the melodious strains of *Veena*. On such remarkable evenings I would sit in an obscure corner and silently watch the company which very often included such distinguished foreigners as the great traveller and philosopher Count Keyserling, that artist and friend of all artists William Rothenstein, the inimitable Pavlova, the great visionary Kakuzo Okakura, the art-critic Ananda Coomaraswamy, the Russian aristocrat and art collector Golubew, the delightful Karpeles sisters and that lover of art, Lord Carmichael."<sup>31</sup>



### The famed South Verandah

The south verandah of their house where they carried out their daily affairs, including painting, has become a legend in itself. About it Abanindranath recollected "First floor south verandah of Jorasanko was the general durbar from generations. In this vast verandah there were chairs and diwans reserved for regular guests and the adult members of the family. Father would be seated in an arm-chair holding his drawing board for making architectural plans. Regular visitors who had almost become members of the family would gather in the mornings and in the evenings. Office work was conducted from here. This was also meeting place for discussions, for gossip and for music.

After father's death his seat was occupied by Gaganendranath who used to paint there. On his side next to him I occupied a seat where I would paint surrounded by my students. Next to me used to sit Samarda. We continued the same kind of routine of this verandah as it was during father's days. And when we became artists and members of the Art Society all the European members of the Society would come here, have drinks, smoke hukah and listen to music."<sup>32</sup>

About the south verandah Rathindranath reminisced<sup>33</sup> "there sat the three brothers .....there they painted, carried on estate work, entertained visitors and held their court in a truly oriental atmosphere of simplicity and repose..... Here also came friends of oriental art and art critics to have a look at the latest drawings and paintings. Dealers would bring old miniatures, illuminated manuscripts and other priceless object d'art, not so often for sale, as for expert opinion and valuation. Besides these, there were of course, a medley of visitors from high officials to petty job seekers and always a group of hangers-on, who regaled the company with a constant supply of the latest gossip of the city."

It may sound strange, but it is a fact nevertheless, that Abanindranath had a wide recognition in Europe as an artist of great merit long before Rabindranath was known there. It was the friends of Abanindranath and Gaganendranath, like E. B. Havell, Thomas Sturge-Moore, Sir William Rothenstein, H. Ponten-Mollar, Norman Blount, Sir John Woodroffe who encouraged the poet to publish his *Gitanjali* in English through the India Society, London, which brought him international fame.<sup>34</sup>

When Rothenstein visited India in 1910, Woodroffe (who knew his India well) gave him the name of the two brothers to meet but did not mention Rabindranath. This shows how little the Poet was known in his own country outside the strictly limited literary circle of Bengal.<sup>35</sup>

Gaganendranath died in 1938 after spending nearly last ten years of his old age in complete oblivion as a paralytic patient which had also left him speechless. It is strange how soon he was forgotten and his life became shrouded in mystery not the least by his own silence about himself and about his art. That is why I have particularly tried to cull and piece together whatever published material is available on him to build up an image of his personality. "He was a prince of manners, a prince in heart and a prince in bounty. His





personal magnetism was a great asset in all social events and for over a decade (meaning the 1920s) his remarkable figure, with streaks of grey hair and beaming smiles, spotlessly dressed with immaculate taste, has dominated over the social life of Calcutta."<sup>36</sup> Marquis of Zetland bemoaned his death as the loss of a valued personal friend. "I knew him at the height of his powers.....I was indeed always conscious when in his presence, of a suggestion of that sublime peace which radiates from the conventional image of the seated Buddha; yet there was a dynamic quality also in his make up for he possessed an attraction which invited immediate response and which tarnished those barriers and restraints which so often hamper the relations between people of different race and upbringing. From the day of our first meeting we worked together in the closest harmony for the attainment of the object we had in view."<sup>37</sup>

Thus Gaganendranath was not an ordinary man. He had wide interests and versatile genius. His versatility was effortless and natural. He was a broad and independent-minded person. Even socially he was a progressive and a radical reformist. Despite this he was basically a modest person full of humility. He is known to have established a large library of his own including upto-date literature on modern art. As a young boy he had studied Sanskrit as diligently as English and French including literary and philosophical works in these languages. He was also a good pianist. He was probably the first designer to use indigenous material like hessian and grass matting to cover the walls of rooms.<sup>38</sup> He also made book bindings with hessian cloth. His sense of humour is testified by the fondness he had in making up himself in different disguises.<sup>39</sup> His flare for satire is seen in the series of caricatures he made between 1916 and 1921 in the Bichitra Club.

### **Bichitra Club**

The Bichitra Club, established in the family house of the Tagores, became their centre of activity between 1915 and 1919 after Abanindranath retired from the art school. Rathindranath played a leading role in organising it. It had to be closed after the setting up of Vishwa Bharati. During the few years the club flourished, it served as an important social, intellectual and artistic centre for Calcutta and contributed greatly to the cultural life of Bengal. It owed all its achievements to the three great personalities—Rabindranath, Gaganendranath and Abanindranath. It had all sorts of activities. During the day it functioned as an art school with studios where painters, Nandalal Bose, A. K. Haldar and Suren Kar worked at their paintings, N. K. Deval modelled figures, Mukul Dey made etchings, while a few students hovered around them. (N. K. Deval, who was not a Bengali, happens to be the only trained sculptor of note to have worked in association with the Bengal School painters).<sup>40</sup> Once again another Japanese artist, Kampo Arai, was invited to work and teach with them. The invitation was extended to him by Rabindranath during his Japanese tour in 1916.<sup>41</sup> Other activities of the club included collecting indigenous artistic crafts which was continued later under the aegis of the reorganized Indian Society of Oriental Art.





It was during these years that Gaganendranath discovered the medium of caricature for giving expression to his fund of humour and satire. The few that found their way in newspapers and magazines (several appeared in the *Modern Review*) established his popularity at once. To meet the demand for reproductions a second-hand litho-press was purchased and the service of an old Muhammadan printer was enlisted. "In the morning Gaganendranath would paint a caricature, the same afternoon would find him transferring it to stone slabs and then supervising the printing of the copies. In this way two volumes of reproductions were published which found a ready sale."<sup>42</sup>

Regarding further activities of the Bichitra Club Rathindranath has recalled: "Once a week the studio would resolve itself into a social club of artists, writers and musicians. And quite frequently there would be dramatic performances or musical *soirees*. In its weekly gatherings could be counted all the literary men worth mentioning at that time in Bengal. All important writings from the pen of my father, Sarat Chandra Chatterji, Pramatha Chaudhari and others were read out here. The *Sabuj Patra* movement, with its advocacy for adopting a purer form of the spoken Bengali as the medium of the language of literature, and freeing it from undue Sanskrit influence, may be said to have had its birth in the Bichitra Club."<sup>43</sup>

### **The Indian Society of Oriental Art**

Art Societies and annual art exhibitions have played not an insignificant role since the last quarter of 19th century in offering the public opportunities to see original examples of art thereby stirring up art consciousness, and also as an encouragement to the artists through the award of prizes and by letting them display their work before the people. In Madras an Annual Fine Arts Exhibition had been instituted under the patronage of the Governor from about 1870. In 1873, at this exhibition Annoda Prasad Bagchi (of Calcutta Art School) carried off the Gold Medal offered by the Maharaja of Vizianagaram "for the best painting by a native of India."<sup>44</sup> Ravi Varma had twice won the Governor's prize in 1874 and in 1878. An Art Society existed in Calcutta also, which arranged art exhibitions annually during 1870s and 1880s mainly for amateurs but the works of students of Calcutta Art School were also shown regularly in them. The prizes they won in these exhibitions not only provided encouragement to them individually but also helped in establishing the justification for the existence of such an art institution during the precarious early years of this art school.<sup>45</sup> But the most prestigious Annual Fine Art exhibition was the one held at Simla under Viceregal patronage. In the first decade of this century it was referred to as the Royal Academy of Anglo-India.<sup>46</sup> It was functioning even as late as 1930s, during that period Amrita Shergil had won an award there. But today all these have ceased to function and we do not know much about their activities.

The most anglicised and influential among these early Art societies was the one at Bombay which is actively functioning even today. It was founded in 1888 with the efforts of indefatigable Griffiths<sup>47</sup> among others and the first major exhibition was held in 1891. A gold medal was instituted for the best exhibit in the Annual Exhibition held regularly



since then which was the most coveted art award in the country until the inception of Lalit Kala Akadami's Annual Art exhibition and a host of prizes awarded by it since 1955.

The Bombay Art Society together with the J. J. School of Art has been the rallying point in art in the western India. During the early decades of this century the merit of most of the major realistic painters of Bombay and Calcutta had been recognized by bestowing on them the gold medal e.g. M. V. Dhurandhar (1895), M. P. Pithawala (1907, 1908 and 1909), J. P. Ganguly (1910), H. Majumdar (1921) and Haldankar (1925).<sup>48</sup> It managed to change with the times though only gradually and Indian style painters also figured among the prize winners viz. Ravishankar Raval (1917). In 1937 Amrita Shergil also had received the gold medal.

Equal in importance but perhaps more far reaching in its impact was the Indian Society of Oriental Art in Calcutta formally established in 1907. But right from the beginning it had a different character and aim compared to other existing societies and was much more than a mere exhibition organization. "The Society served as a focus for the aspirations which were stirring in the rising generation of Bengali artists."<sup>49</sup> The activities of the Society became almost the life work of the two Tagore brothers. Gaganendranath's vast capacities as organizer, cultured deportment and personal magnetism were responsible in rallying together the British well-wishers and Abanindranath as a sympathetic and articulate teacher attracted young students to their fold. The Society served as the bedrock, providing necessary sustenance for the flourishing of the new movement of which it became the champion and the campaigner.

Something like an art club had spontaneously grown around Havell, where artists and art connoisseurs both European and Indian met almost regularly towards the evening at the Art School and used to discuss various aspects of Indian art. This also strengthened the hands of Havell for pursuing the course of overall change in the Art School inspite of opposition and criticism from certain quarters.<sup>50</sup> Bangiya Kala Samsad also helped indirectly Havell in his reorientation scheme. The Samsad was founded in September, 1905. Artists of different sections were its members. Abanindranath, the Vice Principal, served the Samsad as Secretary from its very start.<sup>51</sup>

At that time one of their first exhibitions was held comprising of the paintings of Abanindranath and Japanese prints brought over by Okakura.<sup>52</sup> The exhibition was also visited by Lord Curzon. It was arranged in the premises of the Landholders Association with which Justice Woodroffe and Normon Blount (an English jute broker and senior partner of Messrs. Sinclair Murray and Co.)<sup>53</sup> were also connected. It was on this occasion Abanindranath and Gaganendranath came in contact with them. Woodroffe and Blount along with two Swedish businessmen connoisseurs in Calcutta, Rueboson and Muller, were the most active members of the Society during its earlier years.<sup>54</sup> All of them together, including the two Tagore brothers, formed the purchase committee of the Government Art Gallery while Percy Brown was its Superintendent.<sup>55</sup> Brown, too,





took much interest in the activities of the Society so that he was once sent to Java to take photographs of the monuments at Borobudur.<sup>56</sup>

Another Englishman closely connected with the Society at this time was Edward Thornton—an Engineer in the Martin Company. He had been looking after the Art Club of the Art School in the days of Havell. Thornton was a very intimate friend of Abanindranath who thought him to be an unusually nice person for an Englishman very feelingly recalled by him in his reminiscences.<sup>57</sup> They visited each other frequently. Thornton used to make architectural plans and was very good at painting landscapes of his favourite places like Jaipur, Udaipur etc. He was also an enthusiastic buyer of the paintings of the new painters. (“Sati” of Nandalal Bose had been bought by him). Thornton, in 1912, had also enthusiastically reviewed the Society’s publication “Ten Indian studies” containing ink studies of crows by Gaganendranath.<sup>58</sup> Many other well-to-do Indians, mostly belonging to the Landholders Association, also joined the society including several zamindars and maharajas, viz. Peareymohan of Uttarpara, Jagadindranath Roy of Natore, Bijoychand Mehtab of Burdwan.<sup>59</sup> Several eminent judges, both English and Indian, lent their support. Lord Kitchner, Commander-in-Chief, was its first President.

The object of the Society was “the cultivation by its members, and the promotion amongst the public, of a knowledge of all branches of ancient and modern Oriental Art, by means of the collection and production by its members of objects of such art and the exhibition of such collection by the Society; the reading of papers, holding discussions; purchase of books and journals relating to art; correspondance with kindred societies and with collectors and connoisseurs.”<sup>60</sup>

Right from the outset arranging lectures and discussions on art became its regular features. Coomaraswamy was one of its brilliant speakers who had just made his debut as an art critic. Art journals from various parts of the world were subscribed and circulated among the members.<sup>61</sup> A spate of exhibitions of Indian and Eastern art in general, were arranged including those from private collections. Each piece was carefully selected for quality and craftsmanship.<sup>62</sup> Woodroffe’s personal collection of Japanese prints had also been displayed.<sup>63</sup> On his suggestion a large scale exhibition was arranged comprising of material on arts and crafts from various corners of India. Woodroffe often used to undertake preparation of catalogues with detailed notes in well-written prose for each painting.<sup>64</sup> A spirit of *camaraderie* and informality prevailed among these Indians and Englishmen. The exhibitions and discussions were accompanied by feasting and amusements. When Woodroffe gave a party he used to offer even ‘pan’ to his guests.<sup>65</sup>

The Society first came into prominence by associating with the project of the London India Society to have new copies made of the Ajanta caves under the leadership of Lady Herringham.<sup>66</sup> The Indian Society deputed Nandalal Bose and Asit Kumar Haldar to work under her at Ajanta. The copies were subsequently published by the India Society of London and much admired in Europe.



Major exhibitions till 1919 were the following: Calcutta, 1908, 1910, 1912 and 1913, the first exhibition sent outside Calcutta was in Allahabad in 1911.<sup>67</sup> The first exhibition of Bengal School painters arranged abroad was held at Paris in 1914 through the efforts of Andre Karpeles, later on shown in London at Victoria and Albert Museum.<sup>68</sup> Also exhibitions were sent to Tokyo and Chicago in 1915. The Calcutta exhibition of 1916 was also sent to Madras on the invitation of Annie Besant and James Cousins, who were among the newly converted supporters of the Society.<sup>69</sup> The 1918 exhibition was again brought over by them to Madras and through Venkatachalam shown at Bangalore.<sup>70</sup> Cousins wrote long reviews of the 1916 and 1918 exhibitions for Statesman, later reprinted in his book "The Renaissance in India."<sup>71</sup>

The Society saw immense possibilities in popularizing the work of the new painters and in reforming public taste through circulation of reproductions. An announcement was made in 1908.<sup>72</sup> Till then the reproductions commonly available were those of Ravi Varma and those brought out by the "Calcutta Art Studio." Ramanand Chatterjee was the first (around 1908) to bring out colour plates of the paintings of Abanindranath and other Calcutta artists in his famous journal, The Modern Review. According to his confession, it was Sister Nivedita who was instrumental in opening his eyes to the merits of Indian Art, and she contributed notes on several of the paintings reproduced.<sup>73</sup> Later on the Modern Review prints were sold in sets known as Chatterjee's albums. But during the beginning of this century the colour reproduction processes in India were not much developed (though it was an advancement on the chromo-lithographic process) and failed to translate the delicate tones of the works of Abanindranath. The Society tried other processes undertaken by the London firm of engravers Carl Henstchel who reproduced Nandalal Bose's "Kumari Vrata."<sup>74</sup> The Japanese journal Kokka had reproduced 'Sati' of Nandalal in the Japanese process of colour wood-blocks with great accuracy of colours and tones. Very close to this process was the collotype process invented by Emery Walker of England. This firm produced in this technique many successful colour facsimiles of Indian paintings which were distributed free to the members of the Society.<sup>75</sup>

During the years Lord Carmichael was Governor of Bengal (1912-17) he came in contact with Gaganendranath with whom he became so intimate that he often visited his place, where he would sit in Indian style, smoking hookah and address him in the Bengali intonation "Gogon".<sup>76</sup> According to Abanindranath few people had the discerning eye for art as Lord Carmichael.<sup>77</sup> He very enthusiastically encouraged the revival of artistic crafts of Bengal, in particular, Murshidabad Silk Industry. The Bengal Home Industries Association was established at his suggestion and with the help of Government funds, which he placed at its disposal.<sup>78</sup> He persuaded Gaganendranath to be the Secretary of the Association for which he worked indefatigably and successfully ran its sales depot for many years. On the eve of the outbreak of World War I Lord Carmichael despatched a whole shipload of his art collection to England which included a number of paintings of Abanindranath and others but the steamer was mined and sunk somewhere in the Mediterranean.<sup>79</sup>





The decade of 1920s is another great phase of activity of the Society when Lord Ronaldshay (later Marquess of Zetland and Governor of Bengal from 1917) became its patron. In 1919, he and Gaganendranath had a meeting for reorganization of the Society which had been facing financial difficulties. The Governor managed to secure a recurring Government grant which enabled the reorganised Society to establish a permanent gallery, library and a studio in a spacious suite of rooms in the Samavaya Mansions.<sup>80</sup> From now on the training studio functioned on permanent basis with both Gaganendranath and Abanindranath paying daily visits. For sometime Nandalal Bose served as a teacher (he was called to Shantiniketan in 1919 by Rabindranath). His position was later filled by Khitindranath Majumdar. Some of those who studied here were Devi Prasad Roy Chaudhary, Mukul Dey, Ranada Ukil, Lalit Mohan Sen, Roop Krishna, Bireswar Sen and Chintamani Kar.<sup>81</sup>

In the school, Abanindranath also introduced the study of traditional forms and techniques of Indian crafts with a view to giving new life to them.<sup>82</sup> Alpana motifs were collected and revived. From Mughal book binding was evolved a new leather craft and Alpana motifs introduced in it replacing European design patterns. Giridhari Mahapatra was brought from Orissa to teach traditional craft of sculpture. For clay modelling the toy makers of Krishnanagar were sent for. Dhankoti Achari, a South Indian carpenter, was engaged to make furniture from indigenous designs. New patterns were evolved for architectural decorations based on a study of the old historic buildings.

The annual exhibitions were regular features during this decade. "Held usually in the winter season they served as a most useful purpose as cultural and social occasions, not only for Calcutta but also for the whole country."<sup>83</sup> According to Rathindranath, Gaganendranath was the moving spirit behind their organization and it was the charm of his personality that drew the elite as well as the crowd to the shows.<sup>84</sup> Special mention must be made of the exhibition of drawings, water-colours and graphics of the German Bauhaus held in 1922 in Calcutta, which was the first showing of original works of modern European art in India. It was arranged in exchange of an exhibition of Bengal School painters sent to Berlin in the previous year.<sup>85</sup> Two travelling exhibitions of similar kind had also been sent out to America.

A sumptuous and scholarly journal "Rupam" was brought out regularly from 1920 for ten years under the editorship of O. C. Ganguly. It was one of the finest art journals of the world at the time and represents a landmark in art historical studies of Indian art and aesthetics. Its pages provided a forum for free discussion and controversies.

### **Kakuzo Okakura**

Next in importance to Havell's efforts, which triggered off a whole fervour of rethinking in the attitude towards Indian art and in giving a direction to the new art movement in Calcutta, must be regarded the historic visit of the Japanese thinker and connoisseur, Kakuzo Okakura. His ideas and his own activities in his country which must have certainly been a great source of inspiration to the two Tagore brothers and the men around them must be taken special



note of. Okakura is reported to have visited India twice within an interval of 10 years. The first visit was during 1890s (according to Rathindranath)<sup>86</sup> which is crucial. Abanindranath has talked about him in his reminiscences but mostly regarding his second visit.<sup>87</sup> Generally the date of his visit is given as 1902 which is circumstantially not accurate.<sup>88</sup> The fixing of the date of this visit is important.

When he arrived in India, Okakura had just finished the manuscript of his book 'Ideals of the East' which Nivedita had the privilege to peruse and for which she had prepared the forward. The book was published in 1903.<sup>89</sup> Nivedita knew the Tagores whom Abanindranath first met at a reception given by the American Consulate for Okakura. About this meeting Abanindranath remembered: ".....With her white flowing gown reaching down to her feet, and a rosary round her neck, she looked like an anchorite hewn out of a piece of white marble. Okakura, in all his dignity and majesty and Nivedita with her austere grace, looked like two neighbouring stars shining in the far horizon. It was an unforgettable experience to see these two personalities together."<sup>90</sup> Nivedita was anxious that the Tagore brothers should meet Okakura and had charged him with the task of stirring them up.<sup>91</sup> Surendranath remembers how Okakura surprised him by his abrupt question "what are you thinking of doing for your country?"<sup>92</sup>

Okakura had been campaigning for the unity of Asia to fight the Western domination and as a nostrum to her resurgence. He had observed: "Asia is one..... For if Asia is one, it is also true that Asiatic races form a single mighty web."<sup>93</sup>

He pledged: "Not only to return to our own past ideals, but also to feel and revivify the dormant life of the old Asiatic unity, becomes our mission"<sup>94</sup> and exhorted "The task of Asia today, then, becomes that of protecting and restoring Asiatic modes. But to do this she must herself first recognize and develop consciousness of those modes. For the shadows of the past are the promises of the future. No tree can be greater than the power that is in the seed. Life lives ever in the return to self."<sup>95</sup> Giving the example of his own country he explained "It was some small degree of this self-recognition that re-made Japan, and enabled her to weather the storm under which so much of the Oriental world went down. And it must be a renewal of the same self-consciousness that shall bind up Asia again into her ancient steadfastness and strength."<sup>96</sup>

During the second half of 19th century, Japanese art was experiencing similar impasse and stagnation as in India. There had been a reconstructive movement of preservation and imitation of the ancient masters which had gradually dropped into formalism and meaningless reiteration. Western realistic art, "which confounded beauty with science and culture with industry",<sup>97</sup> had gained ground through government schools of art, imposing that hard crust of mannerism which impedes its progress.

Okakura played a significant role in renationalising of Japanese art. His appreciation of Asiatic art had deepened and intensified by his travels as the head of the Imperial Art Commission sent out in 1886 by the Japanese Government to study art history and monuments of Europe and the United States.<sup>98</sup> On his return, he was appointed Director of



the New Art School at Ueno, Tokyo. In 1897, he resigned due to increasing pressures to give prominence to European methods. Six months later thirty-nine of the strongest young artists in Japan had grouped themselves around him, and they had opened the Nippon Bijitsuin, or Hall of Fine Arts, at Yanaka, in the suburbs of Tokyo, holding biennial exhibitions of their work.<sup>99</sup> Nippon Bijitsuin spearheaded the new movement 'to reconstruct the national art on a new basis, whose keynote should be "Life true to self."<sup>100</sup> This was to be achieved through a higher realisation of the possibilities of ancient Japanese art and a love and knowledge of the most sympathetic movements in western art-creations. Sister Nivedita wrote in her introduction "If we say that Mr. Okakura is in some sense the William Morris of his country..... Nippon Bijitsuin is a sort of Japanese Merton Abbey. Here various decorative arts, such as lacquer and metal work, bronze casting, and porcelain, are carried on, besides Japanese painting and sculpture. The members attempt to possess themselves of a deep sympathy and understanding of all that is best in the contemporary art movements of the West, at the same time they aim at conserving and extending their national inspiration....."

The following ideas of Okakura regarding the new movement initiated by him, I believe, also affected Abanindranath and his circle: Okakura wrote: "According to this school, freedom is the greatest privilege of an artist, but freedom always in the sense of evolutionary self-development. Art is neither the ideal nor the real. Imitation, whether of nature, of the old masters, or above all of self, is suicidal to the realization of individuality"..... "To this school, again, the old art of Asia is more valid than that of any modern school in as much as the process of idealism and not of imitation, is the *raison d'être* of the art impulse. "The stream of ideas is the real; facts are mere incidents. Not the thing as it was, but the infinitude it suggested to him, is what was demanded of the artist."

"Art thus becomes the moment's repose of religion, or the instant when love stops, half-unconscious, on her pilgrimage in search of the infinite, lingering to gaze on the accomplished past and dimly seen future."<sup>101</sup>

After his return to Japan, as promised by him, Okakura sent out two artists to Calcutta who stayed as guests of Tagores—Taikan and Hishida. Taikan, who was a member of the Nippon Bijitsuin,<sup>102</sup> gave several demonstrations of Japanese brush and ink technique so excitedly narrated by Abanindranath.<sup>103</sup> These demonstrations and the prints left over by Okakura were their first direct contact with Japanese art and served as eye-openers to its beauty. It was after watching Taikan at work that inspired Abanindranath (as he confessed later) to evolve his famous "wash-technique." "At a particular stage of the picture, he (Taikan) would go over it with a flat brush dipped in water. I gave the whole picture a bath and discovered the effect to be quite pleasing."<sup>104</sup>





## AESTHETIC IDEAS AND CONTROVERSIES

### Havell begins the battle

‘The destruction of Indian art which is going on under the British rule is a loss to civilization and to humanity which could and should be avoided’, declared Havell in a lecture<sup>1</sup> in 1901. With these words he started his attack on the English system of art education that had been introduced in India by the colonial administrators with its emphasis on training of the hand to reproduce what was kept in front of the eye, referred to as the South Kensington system. Pained to see the plight of arts in this country and moved by the urge to rehabilitate Indian art, E. B. Havell began a campaign which had taken him into the realms of aesthetics and art criticism. His provocative writings were largely responsible for initiating the aesthetic discussion which is the topic of this chapter.

Havell believed that Indian traditional art was not based on visual images but on memory images. Therefore, it was inconsistent to teach the Indian artist to paint cheap pastiches of the Royal Academy. Another inconsistency he pointed out was regarding the Englishmen’s view : “Indian Art is only admirable when applied to industrial purposes, and barbaric or underdeveloped in the higher flight of artistic expression, which we call the ‘Fine Arts’.”<sup>2</sup>

Such double standards, Havell warned, would only hinder and not help in achieving the goal of improving arts in India and felt the British official approach to this problem to be misconstrued. Analysing the disastrous effects of this approach he observed : “The decay of Indian art is mostly due to the fatal mistake which has been made in Indian public buildings in supplanting the living traditional styles of Indian architecture by imitations of modern European scholastic styles. Architecture is the principal door through which the artistic sense of the people finds expression. If that door is mostly choked with rubbish as it is in India, it is not surprising that art industries should decline.”<sup>3</sup>

He laid the proposition that the soundest basis for the industrial regeneration of India was to be found in the revival of the great handloom industry. He suggested that production of Industrial arts in India should be geared to the requirement and needs of the people as a necessary measure for economic progress. Opposed to mechanization he held the view that ‘nowhere in the world is there a splendid field for the development of hand industries than there is in India.’<sup>4</sup> In this context, he felt, art schools had an important role to play and campaigned for a complete revision of the whole set up of the government-run art schools.



Havell's argument about the high design value of Indian crafts was not new. It had already been recognized at the time of the Great Exhibition held in London in 1851. It had also been noted down by Sir George Birdwood in his handbook to the collection of Indian art formed for the first time in the South Kensington Museum.<sup>5</sup> Birdwood had himself pointed out the influence on him of Ruskin's ideas regarding the supremacy of all oriental and medieval European designs over those prevailing in the Victorian time.<sup>6</sup>

It may be noted that Ruskin, followed by William Morris, had taken up the cause of improving industrial designs in England. Morris in particular had been vehement in criticising the machine-made objects of his time as crude, vulgar and overloaded with ornament, which he considered to be the outcome of ill-effect of the industrial revolution.<sup>7</sup> Incidentally, the activities of Ruskin and Morris had also resulted in the reshuffling of schools of design in that country.

Havell apparently was familiar with their teachings and their example seems to have encouraged him in his campaign against Victorian phillistinism which the colonial administration had brought into India. Like Morris, Havell too thought the distinction between 'fine arts' and 'useful arts' to be only arbitrary.

A necessary corollary to his campaign was to refute the Victorian prejudice against the existence of Fine Arts in India. The Victorian point is exemplified in the following quotation of George Birdwood.<sup>8</sup>

"The mythology of *puranas*.....has had a fatal effect in lighting the growth of true pictorial and plastic arts in India. The monstrous shapes of the *puranic* deities are unsuitable for the higher forms of artistic representation; and this is possibly why sculpture and painting are unknown as fine arts in India." He added, "the decorative art of India, which is a crystallized tradition....cannot be ranked....with the fine arts of Europe, wherein the inventive genius of the artist, acting on his own spontaneous inspiration, asserts itself in true creation." Surprisingly enough, these views, which were first written in 1880, Birdwood continued to hold even in 1909 when they were reiterated with greater force!

It was in opposition to Birdwood and with a view to vindicate the position of Indian art, Havell propounded the theory that Indian art was closely bound with the religion and philosophy of the land and that only a deeper knowledge of these other two fields could enlighten one about the aims of Indian art, which he bemoaned, hardly anyone had attempted to do. It was this thinking that led him to write his two famous books<sup>9</sup> toward the end of his official career in India.

According to Havell, it was the Indianness of Indian art which made it unique and it was its abhorrence of the strictly material which made it superior to European Art. Hence the Indian artist was again capable of becoming an artist, which right, the Victorian British administrators responsible for art education, had denied him.





In *The Ideals of Indian Art* he wrote, "Indian art is not concerned with the conscious striving after beauty as a thing worth to be sought after for its own sake; its main endeavour is always directed towards the realization of an idea, reaching through the finite to the infinite."<sup>10</sup> And that, "Throughout Indian art, and throughout the Christian art of the Middle Ages we find the same central idea, that beauty is inherent in spirit and not in matter."<sup>11</sup>

He added further, "The whole spirit of Indian thought is symbolized in the conception of the Buddha sitting on his lotus-throne, calm, impassive, his thoughts freed from all worldly passion and desires, and with both mind and body raised above all intellectual and physical strife, yet filled with more than human power, derived from perfect communion with the source of all truth, all knowledge, and all strength. It is the antithesis of the spirit, which comes not by wrestling nor by intellectual striving, but by the gift of God, by prayer and meditation, by yoga, union with the Universal Soul."<sup>12</sup>

Havell's interpretation of Indian Art and his own theories of art are intermingled in the following passage: "The true aim of the artist is not to extract beauty from nature, but to reveal the life within life, the noumenon within phenomenon, the reality within unreality, and the soul within matter. When that is revealed, beauty reveals itself. So all nature is beautiful for us, if only we can realize the Divine Idea within it."<sup>13</sup>

He sought to support this by referring to Silpasastras "Therefore, it is, as the sage Sukracharya says, that in making images of gods, the artist should depend upon spiritual vision only, and not upon the appearance of objects perceived by human senses."<sup>14</sup>

It is interesting to note that Havell's ideas of the kind that art is not a straightforward transcription of nature, are but similar to those current in post-Impressionist circles at the close of the last century; e.g., Gauguin had said "Don't copy nature too much. Art is an abstraction; derive this abstraction from nature while dreaming before it..."<sup>15</sup> But it is surprising that Havell should have remained indifferent to the later developments in European art (i.e., during the first two decades of this century while he was still alive) and to their relevance to Indian art situation of the time. In fairness to Havell, I may add, that there is more in his ideas than we commonly know today and it will be doing injustice to him to associate him with all the unfortunate qualities that are ascribed to revivalism.

Havell's writings gave rise to the notions of what could be called the 'racial character' and the 'metaphysical view of art,' that were subsequently perpetuated by the so-called Friends of the East Societies, which were established in many parts of the West during the first quarter of this century. The Theosophists too, had joined in this foray.

#### **Coomaraswamy joins the campaign**

In India, the first native to respond to Havell's writings was Ananda Coomaraswamy, in whom Havell found a like-minded Oriental with tremendous intellectual calibre. Coomaraswamy, in his first essays concerning the revival of Indian arts and crafts, repeated Havell's arguments with the same forthrightness, and in an early essay<sup>16</sup> he sought





to justify the Bengal School painters ( at that time called the Calcutta painters ) for their Indianness, irrespective of their technical defects.

Like Havell, Coomaraswamy too was familiar with the role William Morris had played in the improvement of design in England. For, he asked, " But if Abanindranath Tagore and his followers stand in this art revival of ours, to a certain extent in the place occupied by the pre-Raphaelites in the history of English art, where is our William Morris? Probably the time for his coming is not ripe. When he comes, he will do more for Indian applied art than all the schools put together; but it is the function of the schools to make his path no harder than it need be. "17

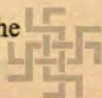
The true function of schools of art in India, he visualised 'is not to introduce European methods and ideals but to gather up and revitalize the broken threads of Indian tradition, to build up the idea of Indian art as an integral part of the national culture, and to relate the work of Indian craftsmen to the life and thought of the Indian people. '18

More than Havell, Coomaraswamy was convinced about the role of tradition in the revival of arts in India. Countering Cecil Burns' suggestion that Indian students must for a time be brought back into close relation with nature, Coomaraswamy observed whether tradition has ever been so 'divorced from nature' as to make it possible to speak of 'return'. He recommended two things: " One, that he ( Indian ) should be saturated with the traditional art of his race in order that he may know how to see; the other, that he be saturated with the traditional culture of the East, that he may know what to see. . "19 He concluded that 'the arts of India must retain their Indian spirit, or become altogether worthless. '20

These views have also a bearing on Coomaraswamy's interpretation of Indian Art. Like Havell, he too considered the religious character as a virtue of Indian art which for Birdwood had been its greatest hurdle and drawback. Coomaraswamy reasoned, " Indian art is essentially religious. The conscious aim of Indian Art is the portrayal of Divinity, "21 and invoked the support of Ruskin who had said that, ".....Michel Angelo....(had) the power of bringing God into the world—making God manifest. "22

Birdwood's attack that Indian art lacked great individuals and that another of its weaknesses was its conventionalized character, was answered by Coomaraswamy by pointing out that Indian artists revered tradition and strictly followed canons. According to him, individualism in art was hardly possible as 'the craftsman is not an individual expressing individual whims, but a part of the universe giving expression to the ideals of its own eternal beauty and unchanging law '23 and that 'patterns.....are things which live and grow, and which no man can create, all he can do is to use them and let them grow. '24

He further added, " Traditional forms..represent rather race conceptions, than the ideas of an artist or a single period. They are vital expression of the race mind. "25





Defending tradition, he proclaimed, "...tradition is a wonderful expressive language, that enables the artist working through it to speak directly to the heart..... It is a mothertongue." <sup>26</sup>

Strict adherence to canons as mentioned by Coomaraswamy, was an unworkable principle in connection with the actual practice of art, had been realized by no less a person than the greatest revivalist painter himself, Abanindranath Tagore. In the preface to his essay 'Some Notes on Indian Artistic Anatomy', he stated that 'these "aesthetic canons" should not be considered as representing absolute and inviolable laws' and exhorted the artists 'not to deprive their art endeavours of the sustaining breath of freedom, by confining themselves and their works within the limits of *Sastric* demonstrations.' <sup>27</sup>

### **Aurobindo's stand point**

Aurobindo Ghosh, in the first decade of this century, was the third thinker along with Havell and Coomaraswamy, to campaign for the revival of art in India. He made a very important observation that in the heat of the current political struggle too much concentration had been on the problems of mechanical and economical aspects of Indian life and its regeneration, while scant attention had been paid to the synthetic and the spiritual side of Indian nationalism. This, he suggested, could be best remedied by giving proper place to art in Indian education (which was "mercenary" and "soulless"), <sup>28</sup> and by realizing the value of art in the training of intellectual faculty.

Aurobindo was responsible for taking Havell's metaphysical view of Indian art to loftier heights and developed his aesthetic creed thus:

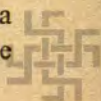
".....that will be the highest and most perfect art which, while satisfying the physical requirements of the aesthetic sense, the laws of formal beauty, the emotional demand of humanity, the portrayal of life and outward reality, as the best European Art satisfies these requirements, reaches beyond them and expresses the inner spiritual truth, the deeper not obvious reality of things, the joy of God in the world and its beauty and desirableness and the manifestation of divine force and energy in phenomenal creation." <sup>29</sup>

This, according to him was what Indian art alone had attempted thoroughly and he, therefore, considered European art to be inferior to the Indian, precisely because of the absence of these elements.

He observed that art had flowed in two separate streams in Europe and Asia, so diverse that, "it is only now that the European aesthetic sense has so far trained itself as to begin to appreciate the artistic conventions, aims and traditions of Asia." <sup>30</sup> He visualized that future development in Asia's art would unite these two streams in one deep and grandiose flood of artistic self-expression perfecting the aesthetic evolution of humanity.

### **James Cousins and the Theosophist viewpoint**

The metaphysical and racial views propounded by the above three thinkers had a profound influence on art criticism of the time. In the early 1920s, in the writings of the





theosophist James Cousins, for example, one can also note the same mystical stream as had been expressed by Aurobindo before. Referring to Asit Kumar Haldar's painting 'Raslika,' he wrote ecstatically, ".....the thrill of *ananda* (joy).....seems to flicker through every line of this work,"<sup>31</sup> and exclaimed, "...what perception of the mystery of the universe moved the artist to this exquisite integration of mythology and nature."<sup>32</sup>

Attempting to analyse the Indian mind, he said, "...to the inner eye of the Indian artist the cloud is not an objective manifestation of a quality of the Creator, but is essentially himself, *Purusha*, the Divine energy, giving out the music of his creative desire, and nature, *Prakriti*, in all the alluding variations of one substance moves rhythmically in response."<sup>33</sup>

He further noted: "The Bengal artists (indeed, one might say, all true Indian artists) are the natural expressors of the higher mental and spiritual aspects of humanity and nature."<sup>34</sup> Agreeing with Aurobindo's interpretation of the fundamental difference between Indian and Western attitudes, he said, "Western Art represents things as they are viewed from the outside. Eastern Art interprets things from the inside."<sup>35</sup> There is a hint of expressionism in the following comment of Cousins to be noted in relation to Rabindranath's ".....the pictures of Bengal School are not to be classified as 'drawings'. They are visual expressions of moods and visions of the soul, in which there is a higher accuracy than that of inch-tape."<sup>36</sup>

While being vague as to the form that national art could take, he had similar high expectations of Indian artists, as had been harboured by Aurobindo. Indeed, more than Aurobindo, his claims for the new Indian art seem too tall. He said in an interview that 'not only will (the neo-Bengal School) exert a considerable influence on the art of the world but has already done so'<sup>37</sup> Again, "The direction in which these pictures will influence the art of the world will be upwards, by which I meant that it will have the tendency to direct Western art towards the finer impulses and the suggestions of the spirit. The present confusion in art outside India arises from the exhaustion of the eye and the lower emotions. This exhaustion cannot be relieved through fantastic variations of the things seen and felt, such as has been attempted by the Cubists, Futurists and similar groups of revolutionaries in art; it can only be relieved by raising of the consciousness of the artist to a higher level, the level of the spirit. This, the work of the Bengal School is helping to do."<sup>38</sup>

In contrast to the above claim, Coomaraswamy was not so sure about the achievement of the Bengal School. He said, "Important as this movement has been, its main significance belongs to appreciation rather than production. It may be compared rather to the work of the pre-Raphaelites than to that of the great post-Impressionists; the time for these has not yet arrived."<sup>39</sup> Coomaraswamy saw revivalism as fundamentally a process of creative introspection preparatory to renewed activity. He envisaged the birth



of a new tradition out of the wreck of the past and the struggle of the present, when new vision would find expression in the language of form and colour.<sup>40</sup>

If the metaphysical view of art had its source in the Upanishadic-Vedantic philosophy, it also seems to have been influenced by the Platonic ideas. At least this is the case with the conception of "revelation" as mentioned by both Havell and Coomaraswamy. "Revelation" is quite akin to Plato's 'divine inspiration' which had been substituted by a different name, i.e., 'shaping force,' by the neo-platonic thinker, Plotinus.<sup>41</sup> These terms are probably akin to what in modern aesthetics is regarded as "intuition" or "creative force," though there is a distinction in that the ancient view connects the term with a supernatural force, whereas in the modern view it is connected with the individual human being. Yet the role of "revelation" in art activity as considered by the revivalists is one of the positive aspects of their thinking.

### **Inherent weakness of their argument**

In spite of this fact, it can be observed retrospectively, that if the emphasis on the metaphysical and the racial character of art was supposed to serve as a source of inspiration and a guiding path for the revitalization of arts in India, then their failure to achieve the desired end is becoming only too obvious now. The usefulness of these concepts for the understanding and upholding of a tradition could be conceded, though even that is open to question. As far as the practice of art is concerned, the metaphysical view would have been helpful, if it had attempted to lay bare the nature and character of creativity (which Rabindranath was to do later), and so also the racial view, if the works of art had been analysed in terms of formal pictorial means which would have benefited the artists directly. This was attempted by B. K. Sarkar.

It is curious that the aesthetics dealing largely with the upholding of a tradition should have dominated even the artistic circles, so that the practice of art too remained under its clutches, from which the Indian artist has found it difficult to free himself to take a path of his own, free from the dictates of anyone, solely depending on his instinct and understanding of the nature of art. That it could not be possible to establish a separate philosophy of art for upholding and understanding a tradition, and another which would have guided the contemporary practising artist, seems to have been the fundamental weakness of revivalism.

An almost complete neglect in theoretical discussion, of the role of the mind, imagination and personality of the artist in the creation of art, has had disastrous effects. In this connection, what Havell had expressed in the following quotation, seems to have gone unnoticed by the other propounders of revivalism: "Change there must be in Indian art, that is both inevitable and necessary, for there is no life in an art which never changes. But the change must come from the quickening, not from deadening, of the creative faculties; from the stimulating of thought and the strenuous upholding of higher ideals not from the substitution of one academic formula for the other."<sup>42</sup>





### Agastya's defence

Agastya, a critic writing in the nineteen twenties, might seem to be thinking in the same vein as above when he wrote;

"It is the racial flavour, the provincial accent, the regional and national twang, echoing the very body and soul of the individual artist which delight the connoisseur, the aesthete, and constitute the peculiar contribution of the artist, his enrichment of the general fund of the aesthetic stock of the world."<sup>43</sup> Elucidating this argument further he wrote; "He (artist) could never have suppressed his own personality, his racial individuality, his regional or environmental peculiarity. If he could succeed in suppressing these, he could not express himself and all that he is made of, and incidentally, he could produce no art. . . . At all places and all periods of art history it has always been "Art and I."<sup>44</sup>

Agastya formulated his views against the attacks of Binay Kumar Sarkar, and was actually concerned with the defence of revivalist aesthetics or what he termed as the "aesthetics of young India." Sarkar had raised the question whether it was still wise to boycott the West in matters of theory and practice of art, and continue to move in the narrow groove of nationalism? Sarkar had in mind the new modern movements in European art and aesthetics. While Agastya displayed remarkable acquaintance of movements like Cubism and Futurism, of artists like Picasso and Matisse, and was aware of the Western enthusiasm (rupollas) for the newly discovered Negro, Peruvian and other forms of primitive art, he still felt (conceding that the lessons from the West are destined to play their inevitable part) that 'before the lesson can be imported—the racial and the national heritage have to be claimed, possessed, appropriated and used as our own.'<sup>45</sup>

Agastya's was a weak defence, for he realized that 'in these days of quick intercourse and consequent interchange of ideas, complete isolation for the purpose of an intensive study of a racial culture is almost impossible.'<sup>46</sup>

### B. K. Sarkar's questioning of the revivalist stand

In 1922, Binay Kumar Sarkar was the first Indian to launch an organized assault on the prevalent views on art.<sup>47</sup> He challenged the methodology of art-appreciation of the time which for him was observed with studies in history, literary criticism and anthropology. He asked as to how much of all this—reading the story and subject-matter, analysing the ideals, the message for the soul—construed to be genuine art criticism, real analysis of rasa? He pointed out that the talk of race ideals or that of Eastern genius being so different from West, be ruled out as of questionable importance.

Well-versed in world literature and art history (remarkable for an Indian of that time to know even all the recent trends in Western Art), Sarkar brought into question nearly all the premises of 'aesthetics of young India.' In the *Aesthetics of Young India*, he proclaimed, contact with the West had a chief place and he strongly deplored the isolationist mentality of the Indians. He argued: "For young India today, to appreciate and



assimilate the new achievement of mankind in aesthetics (he refers to the European developments of the 20th century) as in the utilitarian sciences and arts is not tantamount to inviting an alleged denationalisation."<sup>48</sup> That, he felt, was 'on the contrary, one of the chief means of acquiring strength, in order that Indians may push forward the creative urge of life and contribute to the expansion of the human spirit, as the off-springs of *Maya* and *Visvakarma* should be able to do.'<sup>49</sup>

Well-acquainted with the formalist<sup>50</sup> school of aesthetic thought, he attempted to explain its importance to Indian public in his exhaustive essay "Aesthetics of young India." Campaigning for purity of art, he pointed out that our aim should be *Swaraja* in *Shilpa* that is 'emancipation of art from the despotism of literary criticism, historical or philosophical analysis, ethical or religious studies and democratic, bolshevistic or nationalistic propaganda.'<sup>51</sup>

"These Arts (painting and sculpture) are regulated by the science of space, geometry, the *vidya* of *rupam*, the knowledge of form, morphology."<sup>52</sup> Analysing the work of art, or "Alphabet of Beauty," he observed that 'the language of the painter and the sculptor is, therefore, point, line, angle, cone, square, curve, mass, volume. The creators of beauty speak the vocabulary of positions, magnitudes, dimensions and perspectives.'<sup>53</sup> Sarkar's assertion that 'to a *shilpin* there is only one organ of sense, and that is the eye,' is very significant. "The artist creates whatever his form-sense, his *rasa-jnana*, dictates to him as worth creating. He is solely interested in the juxtaposition of forms, in the intermarriage of shapes, in the permutations and combinations of masses and surfaces, consistent with sculptural or pictorial reasons."<sup>54</sup> To these aesthetic grounds he added another, 'structural composition,' which he considered to constitute the 'spiritual' basis of painting and sculpture. Analysing the role of space in painting, he said, "Space on the canvas is naturally to be divided into different sections and sub-sections. The problem is to divide it in such a manner that the different parts form one harmonious whole, limbs of an integral entity."<sup>55</sup>

Such statements reveal Sarkar's deep understanding of the nature of work of art, and represents a radical departure from the aesthetic thinking of the time, as he believed that the form-sense, the *rasa-jnana*, that is the sense of 'composition,' could be analysed exactly and objectively which does not defy analysis as mystics would, say, have us believe it. Also he observed that 'the mechanism of colour construction, colour harmony, spacing and grouping are among the universal laws of *rasa-vidya* or aesthetics which one finds both in East and West.'<sup>56</sup>

The achievements of modern art, Sarkar evaluated thus, "It is the exclusive employment of the brush and the consequent manipulation of paintings, without the support and background of drawings, which is one of the greatest contributions of the modern, especially of the contemporary Occident to the achievements of mankind in *rupam*. In such 'pure painting,' the idiom that the artist speaks is that of colour and nothing but colour.



Colour alone has thus been made to evolve the dimensions of sculpture on canvas and to produce the harmony of structural composition.”<sup>57</sup>

The significance of these developments for Indian art lay, according to him, in the fact that in Indian painting colour was secondary as it did not have the mass, the depth, the volume, the ‘architectural’ or ‘sculpturesque’ quality.

Though Sarkar’s essay does not seem to have made much impact on the existing beliefs in the country, it remains a landmark in the history of Indian art and criticism. In it, for the first time, an Indian had discussed the revolutionary movements in European art and aesthetics, and had asked for readjustment of our values and beliefs in relation to them. It is parallel to Sarkar’s article that the first great break with the narrow revivalism was first manifest in the work of Gaganendranath Tagore. His Cubist-Romantic paintings of around 1920 are the first truly modern paintings in India with which begins a new phase of art out-dating Abanindranath’s wash phase. Indeed, Sarkar’s essay could be regarded as a revolutionary manifesto composed as vehemently and with the same fervour as the Futurist manifestoes but sadly enough, his views did not get the attention that they rightly deserved.

It was obvious that Sarkar should have been one of the first critics to have noted the significance of Gaganendranath’s incursions into cubism. He said, “.....I believe that a lover of art will find in these formless forms of absolutely no historical or racial context some of the most vitalizing colour compositions and architectonic expressions..... I should invite all art critics and lovers of art to begin with such specimens as object lessons in ‘pure art.’ .....It is in such compositions, thoroughly futuristic as they are, that we begin to appreciate without the scaffolding of legends, stories, messages and moralizings, the foundations of genuine artistic sense.”<sup>58</sup>

#### **Rabindranath’s views**

Next in line to break the deadlock in Indian aesthetic thinking in the twenties, was Rabindranath Tagore. He expressed his impatience with the Traditionalists thus, “I strongly urge our artists vehemently to deny their obligation to produce something that can be labelled as Indian Art, according to some old world mannerism. Let them proudly refuse to be herded into a pen like branded beasts that are treated as cattle and not as cows.”<sup>59</sup>

Taking objection to the view that individualism was irrelevant in art (Havell and Coomaraswamy), he said, “If it is a fact that some standard of invariable formalism has for ages been following the course of the arts in India, making it possible for them to be classified as specially Indian, then it must be confessed that the creative mind which inevitably breaks out in individual variations, has lain dead or dormant for those torpid years.”<sup>60</sup> Urging for a more open mind he said, “All traditional structures of art must have sufficient degree of elasticity to allow it to respond to varied impulses of life, delicate or virile; to grow with its growth, to dance with its rhythm.”<sup>61</sup>



Being a creative artist himself, Tagore in his writings is much concerned with the individual personality of the artist, something that had been a taboo in the racial-metaphysical view. While Sarkar showed a keen understanding of the constituents (or the body) of a work of art, Tagore displayed a deep insight into the creative urges of the human personality. The fundamental tenets of Tagore's aesthetic theory, therefore, are 'individualism' and 'self-expression,' in which one can trace a flavour of Bergsonian<sup>62</sup> ideas. Instead of asking the question "what is art?", he said it was more proper to consider its origin and source. Answering the question that he liked to pose, he noted, "Of all living creatures in the world, man has his vital and mental energy vastly in excess of his need, which urges him to work in various lines of creation for its own sake."<sup>63</sup> The difference between animal and human being lies in that man has a surplus emotional energy which is not occupied with his self-preservation. This surplus sought its outlet in the creation of art.

Developing his expressionist theory, Tagore said, "Man feels his personality more intensely than other creatures, because his power of feeling is more than can be exhausted by his objects. The efflux of the consciousness of his personality requires an outlet of expression. Therefore, in art, man reveals himself..."<sup>64</sup>

The principle object of art for Tagore was the expression of personality. Defining "personality" and its relation to expression, he said, "...as a person, he (man) is an organic man who has the inherent power to select things from his surroundings in order to make them his own. He has his forces of attraction and repulsion by which he does not merely pile up things outside him, but creates himself. The principle creative forces which transmute things into our living structure, are emotional forces..."<sup>65</sup> Man's personality is also revealed in his activities of utility, but there, self-expression is not his primary aim. Continuing his line of argument, he said, "When our heart is fully awakened in love, or in other great emotions, our personality is in its flood-tide. Then it feels the longing to express itself for the very sake of expression. Then comes Art..."<sup>66</sup>

And when Tagore himself started to paint, he talked about creative activity as 'play of forms ...purely for the sake of assembling different forms together,'<sup>67</sup> Like Sarkar, Tagore too denied that paintings carry any philosophical concepts or claim to solve any problems of the day or impart any moral lessons. He felt that in work of art, "All else is irrelevant. If it conveys some message, moral or ethical, it is something over and above, a surplus."<sup>68</sup> (Note that Havell had thought it the birth right of art to be ethical teacher and spiritual helper of mankind).<sup>69</sup> Giving an analogy with music, Tagore observed that music had thrown off its bond of subservience to words, and this right of independence had given music its greatness. In the same way Tagore thought that 'pictorial and plastic arts were aiming to be freed from an absolute alliance with natural facts or incident.'<sup>70</sup>

Again, like Sarkar, Tagore too gave prime importance to pictorial means in art. While Sarkar had emphasised the structural and geometric aspect of pictorial construction, Tagore moved further. He saw pictorial elements as vehicle of expression (like as





we find in the recent aesthetical writings of, for example, Rudolph Arnheim ).<sup>71</sup> He said, "Some lines showed anger, some placid benevolence, through some lines ran an essential laughter...."<sup>72</sup>

More and more, Tagore talked of loosening all restraints in creative activity. "It is the element of unpredictability in art which seems to fascinate me strongly,"<sup>73</sup> he said.

And, in one of his last letters, we have his final words on creativity: "The art of painting eludes me.....(am) reminded of what the *Vedas* say: *Ko Vedah*. Nobody knows, perhaps not even the Creator. Probably in no other scripture do we come across such a voice of doubt—daring even to assert that the Creator himself does not fully know his own creation. It is the tide of creation itself which bears it along its own current."<sup>74</sup>

Encouraged by the ideological sanction of Rabindranath, an anonymous writer in 1928, could discretely but pointedly write thus about Gaganendranath (with unmistakable allusions to what was wrong with the Bengal School painters, though not mentioned by name): "He is a pure painter. He has shown himself a great painter in the originality and the intenseness of his vision and in the ease with which he can transform any conventional form into a virile and significant composition. He is no less great in his rigid adherence to the possibilities of restrictions, too, of his chosen medium of expression. In his works there is no irrelevant call for help to poetry, the legends, music, morality or sentiment, to pretty names and pretty conceptions, to the unending series of sugary themes, with cloying abundance of garlands, dreams of withered leaves and calls of the unknown. He is not, on the other hand a purist, of the formal school, who leaves the psychological content of his pictures severely alone and devotes himself exclusively to a search for the abstractly beautiful form. This type of painter has become quite common in the advance artistic circles of Europe. Had Gaganendranath Tagore been of this type he could not have made himself the keen interpreter of psychological values his cartoons and his portrait studies reveal him to be. But in him, the profundity of the psychological content owes nothing to extraneous, non-pictorial sources. His drawings were evoked as inspired visions, and they appeal through the eyes and eyes alone."<sup>75</sup>





## ABANINDRANATH

### Problems involved in evaluating Abanindranath's paintings

Out of the three painters perhaps maximum attention has been paid so far by various scholars to the life and work of Abanindranath. His paintings attracted attention of Havell who wrote several articles on them during the first decade of this century which appeared in the *Studio* in 1902, 1905 and 1908.<sup>1</sup> Many paintings were reproduced in these articles in which Havell also traced the links of Abanindranath's style with the past tradition.<sup>2</sup> Havell's account has since then been repeated several times by many writers.<sup>3</sup> Simultaneously, Abanindranath's paintings began to be reproduced fairly regularly in magazines like the *Modern Review* and *Prabasi* from about 1905 onwards.<sup>4</sup> In his autobiography he also told the story of his early years as a painter.<sup>5</sup> In 1914, a large exhibition of Calcutta painters was held in Paris and London. The catalogue of this exhibition lists about 66 paintings of Abanindranath.<sup>6</sup> Thus his early works are rather fully documented and till 1914 it is almost possible to work out a reasonable sequence of his paintings.

A fresh and detailed chronology was worked out by Binode Bihari Mukherji and Mukul Dey in 1941 at the time of bringing out a special Seventieth Birthday Number of *Vishwa Bharati Quarterly*.<sup>7</sup> They had the benefit of the artist's presence and the first hand information of his pupils available to corroborate their findings. The chronology given by B. B. Mukherji of the early years of Abanindranath (upto about 1910) on one hand and that by Mukul Dey and Stella Kramrisch on the other hand do not tally.<sup>8</sup> It has been further confused by a later publication on Abanindranath's "Early Works" by the Indian Museum, Calcutta, in which notes to most of the plates were contributed by O. C. Ganguly.<sup>9</sup> Perhaps the dates given by all of them are independently mentioned without each other's awareness. Note has been taken in the present study of these discrepancies. Examining the chronology presented by B. B. Mukherji, I have not found any new evidence which could alter his scheme. However, his chronology has been verified by checking published material including that which was perhaps not used by or accessible to the above-mentioned writers. In this process it has been possible to add a few details here and there though the chronology largely stands.

Mukherji has also pointed out the changes which occurred in Abanindranath from one phase to another, which are also generally acceptable. But there are questions which have implications on Abanindranath's style and the sources of his influences which have not received much attention from earlier writers. For example, which were those Irish



manuscripts he received from England regarding which he mentioned in Jorasankore Dhare? How much was he acquainted with Pre-Raphaelite painting, as well as those of Victorian period in general? When actually did the two Japanese artists come to India about whom every writer has mentioned but not given the exact dates? What did he pick up from them? What is individually the place of each of the various art styles like Persian, Mughal, Japanese, Chinese and Ajanta in the formation of Abanindranath's style? At what stage the transition from academic style to "Indian" style took place? Is the phase named "Indian" completely devoid of European influence?

These are according to me vital questions for the early phase which I have tried to discuss in some detail. Also on the whole certain paintings require more detailed analysis. For no writer has subjected paintings to detailed stylistic examination. Such analyses will also enable to decide whether or not he can be called a revivalist.

### Early Training

We do not know any painting by Abanindranath before 1890. He began painting fairly early and has talked about his first paintings as a teenager in his autobiography. J. P. Ganguly has also recounted how he was a witness to some of these.<sup>10</sup> But it is not possible to trace them. His earliest reproduced works are the drawings in Rabindranath's book of poems, *Chitrangada*.<sup>11</sup> Then several pen drawings exist which were for the first time reproduced in 1937.<sup>12</sup> They are maturer than the *Chitrangada* illustrations. (plates 11 and 13) Conceived in tones and chiaroscuro by judicious use of cross-hatchings they come close to the drawings of Millet in effect (plate 12) which probably Abanindranath knew through reproductions as they were widely circulated in Europe by prints (or perhaps through Ghilardi, or Palmer, who might have been a Millet follower). By comparison *Chitrangada* illustrations are crude as was also confessed by the painter himself later on.<sup>13</sup> Thus they are later and not earlier than *Chitrangada* as asserted by Mukul Dey who puts them at 1890.<sup>14</sup>

We are also not certain about the years during which Abanindranath apprenticed himself to the two European painters, O. Ghilardi and Charles Palmer, working in Calcutta at the time. In Jorasankore Dhare, Abanindranath himself described his early training under the aforesaid painters mentioning the former first in the sequence. He also refers to the execution of his drawings for "*Chitrangada*" after having established a studio in the western fashion following the lessons taken from the Italian painter, Ghilardi, who taught as vice-principal at the Calcutta School of Art since 1886.<sup>15</sup> The apprenticeship might have been during 1890 (when Abanindranath was about 20) and lasted for about six months. He learnt to draw realistic representations of trees, foliage, human figures etc. The set of drawings may have been done at this time or subsequently.

Other known works after discontinuing this apprenticeship are the portraits in pastels. This technique also was picked up by him from Ghilardi. Among the pastel portraits that exist, one is that of young Rabindranath and the other of the poet's father. (plates 15, 16) The poet is shown as an engrossed young man while his father has



hardened features in contemplative demeanor. It may be noted that in Europe, the last quarter of nineteenth century, is a great period of pastel technique especially used by Degas and Renoir. There is a softness in Abanindranath's portraits and a colouristic treatment because of which they may appear impressionistic but they are not strictly so. They have a certain spontaneity avoiding the rigid academic modelling. They are thus first portraits of their kind done in India. By comparison the contemporary portraits of Ravi Varma are harsh in treatment rendered mechanically and without feeling.

Perhaps subsequent to these portraits he apprenticed to Palmer to master the oil medium. With him he studied for about one and half years according to his fellow pupil J. P. Ganguly.<sup>16</sup> Palmer had been a teacher at the South Kensington School (the present Royal College of Art, London).<sup>17</sup> Abanindranath painted from "white" models but did not like to paint from the nude. He developed an abhorrence for the European rendering methods. An assignment of painting a skull had given him nausea and heavy fever.

The western type training was complete by establishing a studio with north light, painting from models and going out with easel and painter's knap-sack to paint landscapes.<sup>18</sup> For some time he concentrated on water-colour landscapes on spot, reportedly at Monghyr, which are unfortunately unidentifiable.

This phase of Abanindranath's training is noteworthy. He had received lessons under two accomplished European painters in the western realistic techniques. He learnt to render what he saw in tone values developing a sensitive observation of things as they appeared to the eye. This personally I think is notable because throughout his work, the realistic rendering quality is present which was to remain basic to his approach.

It would have been of added interest if it were possible to distinguish among his extent early works as to which quality could be ascribed to the teachings of Ghilardi and which to those of Palmer in the absence of any known oils by Abanindranath. His drawings and pastels do not bear any traces of neo-classicism i.e. the emphasis is not on idealized proportions derived from Greek sculpture nor on clean lyrical contours. The quality of chiaroscuro in the drawing and a certain impressionism in the handling of pastel enable to infer on the type of painting the two Europeans adhered to, that is to say they were not strictly academic painters.

### First Indian style paintings

Although he had painted a few pictures in Ravi Varma style<sup>19</sup> he was not to follow the same path as other Indian painters trained in the European manner. Many doubts arose in his mind and two incidents took place which are crucial for his future development. He received from an English lady a set of illustrations of Irish melodies which he referred to as Irish paintings as well as examples of old European art. From this it is difficult to guess the style of these paintings. Similarly there is a confusion in the way he refers to a set of Persian paintings, a relative of his brought from Delhi at this time. Since he mentions them as specimen of old Indian art the theme of which was *Indra Sabha* they could not have been Persian but Indian miniatures of one of



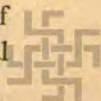
the northern kalam. Now that he had had a glimpse of Indian art (he said in his autobiography) he knew what to do.<sup>20</sup> At this time he also seeped himself thoroughly in epics and ancient literature, especially (on the advice of Rabindranath) Vaishnava Padavali of Chandidas and Vidyapati. The result was his first painting in Indian style, called *Shuklabisar* (plate 14).

Also called *Avisar* it is more like a manuscript illumination where the text, the illustration and the border decoration integrate into a total whole more like the adoptions and revival of medieval European manuscript designing as practised by William Morris in England.<sup>21</sup> It is assumed that the Irish illustrations that Abanindranath received from England could have been of such kind. At any rate it will be noted subsequently that his work in this decade does point to his acquaintance of English art of that time. (Apart from the academic painters, these were the Pre-Raphaelites and the fine-de-siecle illustrators like Beardsley). Abanindranath himself has mentioned the old files of "London News" he had ransacked in his father's library as a young boy.<sup>22</sup> Certain characteristics in his work between 1895 and 1900 do have a general kinship with many of Victorian types of painting mentioned above i.e. the way the details are clearly delineated especially the foliage, the emphasis on contour and subtle gradations of tone so that there is minimum contrast between light and dark, fluttering draperies, linear folds modelled in faint tones but not actually in patterns of line.<sup>23</sup>

The figure in *Avisar* is insubstantial. In the face few casual brush strokes stand for the eye and lips. The forehead and nose of the facial profile make one straight line, a type also found in the Krishna Leela set. Understandably Abanindranath was not satisfied. He felt Radha did not look Indian, but a white woman in a sari.<sup>24</sup> He therefore studied more diligently both the Indian style as well as techniques including such processes as the use of gold leaf. What followed were sets of 20 or 25 illustrations each of *Krishna Charitra*, *Buddha Charitra* and *Vaital Panchnishi*.

In context with these paintings it must be said that it was for the first time after a long break an Indian painter thought in terms of Indian types and Indian style. The means to achieve this was to adapt Indian prototypes and Indian subject matter. But only in intention and not in practice was this attitude anti-European. For he never gave up realism and also that in effect his paintings come close to the linear, shadow-less painting which is characteristic of the European Art Nouveau at the turn of the century.

The emphasis on Indian subject-matter actually points out to the importance he gave to subject matter itself not only as the initial stage of the creative process but also the final significance of the creative work. He had advised his students "Soak your heart first in the shower of Kalidasa's poetry, then lift your eyes towards the sky. You will then appreciate the eternal rhythm of the everfresh cloud-messenger. First soak yourself in the great poet Valmiki's description of the sea, then proceed to paint a sea of your own."<sup>25</sup> This preoccupation with "illustration" we shall see remains perpetual right through which in fact constrained his future growth.





The Krishna Leela set (plates 17 and 18) is first of the several, illustrating themes from ancient Hindu epics and literature between 1895 and 1900. That this set was done around 1895 is conjectured because it was shown to Palmer who advised him "to proceed in this line and produce more pictures of similar nature."<sup>26</sup> They do not yet have the quality of "finish" as in the later sets. The handling is more like the western *gouache*, (not transparent or tempera). The figures continue to be fragile and tiny. The facial profile is rudimentarily treated like in *Avisar*. But in their format they are extremely small and emulate Indian prototypes even leaving large, though undecorated, margins. Use of linear perspective is seen in one of them shown here (plate 18), but in another one, although figures have some suggestion of volume, there is an attempt at two-dimensional effect by introducing "flattened" architectural elements on the two flanks of the painting while figures are grouped in the middle (plate 17). Here the space is suggested in terms of parallel planes and not through receding orthogonals.

These compositional and spatial devices are again used more prominently in plate 19 from the *Ritu Samhar* set, done toward 1900, as can be observed from the comparison with a Kangra miniature, *Sit Vihar* (plate 21) which belonged to the Tagore collection.<sup>27</sup> The flat planes of the walls, the fully seen rectangular tops of the cot and the low table in the front, together with the ground plane, appear parallel to themselves as well as to the picture plane as in the Kangra painting. But it is compromised by not representing the tops of the cot and low tables as right-angled rectangles but with slightly acute angles so that the "fixed eye" view-point is not entirely avoided. Finally when we notice that the figures are fully modelled and faces greatly worked out than before, it can be observed that there is a stylistic dichotomy in this painting. Similar stylistic dichotomies are present in many such works of Abanindranath where he uses the compositional layout of Indian prototypes. It may be concluded that he was not interested in the total "flat-design" system of much of Indian painting whereas he more and more seems to be involved in painstakingly working out small areas and details in terms of naturalism.

Example of this is the *Traveller and the Lotus*, (plate 32) in which, however, lines play a greater role which incidentally is not the case in another painting the well-known *Abhisarika* (plate 22) of the same period. Also titled *In the Dark Night* its facial type both in its profile as well as modelling and in the greater attention paid to the eye is close to that found in the paintings of Burnes-Jones (the second generation Pre-Raphaelite) (see plate 24). The fluttering drapery is again a common element between the two which is also found in another of Abanindranath's paintings, *Siddhas of the Upper Air* (plate 23). The hem of *Abhisarika's* sari towards the feet is blown up by the wind creating zigzag contours again like Burnes-Jones. Even close to his female figures is the Indian *Abhisarika's* posture and gestures. That Abanindranath does not linearize the drapery folds in the Indian way can be seen by referring the Kangra Radha with fluttering *dupatta*. (plate 25) Havell admitted the *Abhisarika* as a Pompeiian motif in which Abanindranath had contrived to give a distinctive note by the sincere



Indian feeling he brings to all his work, with the traditions of the Ajanta School as a precedent.<sup>28</sup>

*Ramachandra and the Deer* (plate 28) is another work which is close to Pre-Raphaelite painting in the handling of detail. But the most typical and elaborate work of this phase is the one called *Buddha and Sujata*. (plate 26) The elaborate system of curves into which is transformed the surface texture of the bark of the trunk of the Banyan tree is very art nouveauish—a casual parallel is again a painting by Burnes-Jones, *Pelicans*. (plate 27) In spite of such closeness with art-nouveau it must be noted that despite of his Asian origin he never went to the extreme extravagancies of decorative linear patterning like, for example, in the work of Toorop. (plate 29) Yet it may be observed that his draughtsmanship at this time is not of such high order as Toorop or Beardsley. The weakness in his draughtsmanship was also acknowledged by Coomarswamy though when Roger Fry pointed to it he was dubbed as prejudiced.<sup>29</sup>

The mingling of Indian and Western elements is a phenomenon generally found in much of 19th century Indian painting. Therefore, Abanindranath's work done so far may be considered only a continuation of the Company School and Ravi Varma. Of course, both Ravi Varma and Abanindranath were much more cultured as individuals and more accomplished as painters compared to the bazar craftsmen. Both these artists took themes from Indian mythology and literature and employed European methods of rendering. Following neo-classical style, the former sought to create Indian types by using models from "life" whereas Abanindranath, echoing certain European trends of his time, went to the examples of past traditions to evolve the true Indian types. In this attempt at forging a link with the past (which had entirely escaped the convention-ridden and inspirationless bazar craftsman) could be considered the ushering of a new phase which coincided with the beginning of the new century—which is named as revivalism. Preferring the small format and the technique of the miniaturist, while rejecting oil medium and the easel painting approach, was also part of the revivalist tendency.

Rightly then Havell considered these pictures to be a continuation of the Mughal style. He observed, with reference to them: "The traditions of the Mughal school of artists are living traditions. In following them Mr. Tagore is not as it were putting back the hands of the clock. While he is as yet far from achieving the marvellous certainty of line and the daintiness of finish found in the best Mughal work, there is poetic charm and sentiment of the old world stories he delights to illustrate which are peculiarly his own."<sup>30</sup>

Here the justification of following Mughal tradition may be noted, the 'marvellous certainty of line and the daintiness of finish found in them' which he was to achieve in the next set of pictures after 1900.

#### "Mughal" Series

Three of the so-called "Mughal" paintings had been exhibited in the Indian Art Exhibition held at the time of 1902 Delhi Durbar.<sup>31</sup>



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One of them was *Building of the Taj* (plate 37) in "body colour" touched with gold and silver and signed and dated 1901. Here the emperor is shown regally seated on his throne surrounded by the master of works showing him the model of the building, a priest making selections from the holy book for engraving on the walls of the edifice and two attendants. Compared to an actual Mughal miniature (as in plate 38) the blank portion through the throne is turned into an overcast sky and unlike the flat representation of the Mughal throne Abanindranath has drawn it in perspective. But the emphasis is on the delineation of heads—an important aspect of his work during this decade—for which this painting was praised by O. Ghilardi and Cecil Burns, who were among members of the Judging Committee and who awarded a silver medal to another of his entries *The last days of Shah Jahan*.<sup>32</sup> (plate 39) Its delicate colouring and the foreshortening of emperor's head were regarded as its striking aspects.<sup>33</sup> Indeed space and linear perspective is an important thematic element here which distinguishes it from a Mughal miniature where "vertical" perspective is employed tilting the ground upward. (plate 40)

In his previous paintings space is generally left undefined as in *Abhisarika* and *Siddhas of the Upper Air* or it is blocked out by means of a horizontal wall as in *Ritu Samhar* paintings. In the present painting recourse is taken to the *trompe-l'oeil* view-point not necessarily to establish spatial structure (that has never been the preoccupation of Abanindranath) but because Taj had to be shown in the distance and the emperor, who was on his death bed, had to be drawn in a posture which would conveniently direct his glance toward the building commemorating his beloved queen.

There are two more paintings of Mughal subjects of a slightly later date, though from the same decade; *Head of Dara* (plate 43) and *Shah Jahan dreaming of the Taj* (plate 45) But they belong to his "wash" phase and have nothing to do with Mughal composition. In the *Head of Dara* may be noted the arrogant stance of Aurangzeb in the way he pecks at the severed head of his brother with a stick.

At this time Abanindranath had copied several Mughal heads after his interest was aroused in this school of Indian painting by Havell. He had taken him round during his first visit to the Art Gallery of the Calcutta Art School where he saw them closely and with magnifying glass to study their minute technique and exquisite finish.

He exclaimed: "I realised for the first time what treasure lay hidden in the medieval art of India. I saw too what was lacking in the motif—the emotional element. And this I determined to supply. That I realised to be my mission."<sup>34</sup>

The painting *Last Hours of Shah Jahan* could be regarded as a Mughal painting infused with *Bhava*.<sup>35</sup> Such quality of emotion is found in greater degree in the *Omar Khayyam* set. Thus these paintings are not feeble or "failed" emulations of Mughal miniatures.<sup>36</sup> They are part of his continued experimentation in evolving an Indian style. There is also now a broadening of his themes which were so far mainly Hindu. In this series of paintings he is not only interested in Mughal art but also in Mughal history for





which there had been a great enthusiasm in Bengal at this time through the writings of e.g. Jadunath Sarkar.<sup>37</sup> Also Rabindranath had written a poem on "Taj Mahal" probably at the same time.

### "Wash" Phase

The period from around 1905 to about 1910 is a turning point. Not only had he directly studied Mughal painting he also came face to face oriental art (refer visit of Okakura, Exhibition of Japanese art in Calcutta, prints in Kokka magazine, presence of two Japanese artists sent by Okakura). It is under the impact of the effects in Oriental painting that Abanindranath Tagore evolved his famous "wash" technique which is supposed to be his *sine qua non*. But no critic has tried to point out the exact parallels which could have served as Abanindranath's sources since both in Chinese and Japanese paintings there are many varieties of types and techniques. He was not keen on the calligraphic ink work. According to his own words he found the effect interesting when he saw Taikan going over his painting with a wide brush loaded with water. In addition could also be mentioned the misty effects of Chinese Ming period paintings and the late phase of Japanese Kano School where calligraphic brush work did not predominate but instead soft effects, almost bordering on naturalism, were more frequent (like in the paintings of Itcho—1652-1725).<sup>38</sup>

The first set in this style is the one based on Rubbaiyats of Omar Khayyam. (*Bharat Mata* inspired by the movement against partition of Bengal in 1905 is also regarded as one of the earliest pictures in wash technique). *Omar Khayyam* paintings are not in one consistent style, which suggest that they were prepared over a number of years probably from about 1905 onwards till 1909.<sup>39</sup> In the next year they were published as an album. The *Old Gardener* (plate 46) is stylistically closer to the paintings done between 1895 and 1900, which may therefore be the first in the series. Although the "ground" is in thin haze, the tree and the figures in it are naturalistically painted. It is therefore possible that the wash phase began around 1905.

For nearly three decades "wash" remained the most favourite technique for him while the range of subjects and themes were enlarged. From *paucan* and literary, to historical topics he also turned to nature and to landscapes, to animals and birds, to portraiture, and subsequently back to history, literature and myths.

In 'wash' painting bright colours are avoided. Colours are not applied flat but subtly and evenly graded giving the effect of monochromatic haze. The colour is applied in transparent washes, allowed to dry then given a 'bath', that is, the paper on which they are applied is dipped in water and again left to dry. This is done each time till the colours develop a 'body' and a certain opacity. The characteristic 'haze' effect is possible due to use of transparent colour and of water baths which softens the effect.

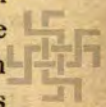
Thus far the effects are achieved in emulation of and to resemble oriental painting. Here the presence of certain elements of Impressionism and its Whistlerian variant cannot



be altogether discounted. But the final finishing by means of single bristle brush with hair thin lines at contours or in the details culminating with a few touches of high light on the face—this is partly in the fashion of miniature painting. However, the use of highlight is again European. “There are four stages in the making of a picture, namely *dhautā*, *bighattita*, *lanchhita* and *ranjita*, that is washing, analysing, drawing and colouring”.<sup>40</sup> Thus the ‘wash’ phase in terms of technique as well as style is a synthesis. Yet these paintings again can be considered akin to the fin-de-siècle shadowless paintings of Europe including the illustrations of the Englishman, Beardsley (1890-95). It will be relevant here to quote Andre Karpeles (the French painter-friend of the Tagores) who in the course of her article on Abanindranath attempted a definition of art thus, as if she were speaking for him: “Painting is a kind of means adapted by artists of creating a kind of writing with the aid of pencils and colours. Painting is the art of rendering durable by means of an assemblage of lines and colours a fugitive impression. It is the art of materialising an idea by means of a decorative composition, a novel arabesque.....It is a mysterious language which attempts to translate from another language still more mysterious and undefinable, what the outer world and the sense perceptions speak to the soul.” Herself a painter following the “synthetist” manner of Gauguin, her ideas reflect an opinion current during the post-Impressionist period.<sup>41</sup>

I think knowledge of Beardsley on the part of Abanindranath cannot be ruled out—(the sources are (i) Studio Magazine started in 1893 and wellknown in India—Havell’s first essay on Abanindranath Tagore appeared in this magazine in 1902, and (ii) “Yellow Book” which was also known in India—as generally any manifestation in England usually would be noticed by anglicised Indians). Compare Abanindranath’s *Azan* (plate 31) from *Omar Khayyam* set and Beardsley’s illustration for Oscar Wilde’s “Salome”. (plate 30) The basic composition of a robed figure crouched on knees occupying one side of the painting, an upright curve separating land and water, which is suggested by swirling ripples, is seen in both the paintings.

Also frequently one notices curves of figures contrasted with straight lines and right angles of architectural elements like walls and windows, in both Beardsley’s works and the *Omar Khayyam* set. Abanindranath may have evolved this practice through Indian miniatures. Comparison is given between his painting of Canto II (plate 42) and a Kangra painting *Lover’s quarrel* (plate 41) which was in the collection of the Art Gallery of the Calcutta Art School. Compositionally they are close to each other—human figures against backdrop of verticals and horizontals of architecture, the male figure in each placed off-centre near the corner and the girls in each seated in identical crouched postures. While there is a certain severity in the traditional prototype, the man and woman of Abanindranath are lost in a world of their own. This “melting away in their own reverie” as observed by sister Nivedita, is what contributes to the mood of the painting.<sup>42</sup> Definite contour lines are consistently used for the first time by Abanindranath in these paintings. He was nearing forty and these are the first group of his





mature paintings where the various techniques and stylistic elements are synthesised in right balance. He had achieved what may be called an "Indian naturalism" since Europe had its own and so had the Far East.

More typical in hazier and pale tones are the following paintings done after the *Omar Khayyam* set between 1909-13 : *Shah Jahan Dreaming of Taj*, *Devdasi*, *Kajari Dance*, *The Last Journey*. They were all shown in the 1914 exhibition at Paris and London. They can be taken as a high point in his development thus far. The first two are veiled in a haze especially *Devdasi*. (plate 47) Here, however, contours are sharp suggesting more a division of surface i.e. the effect is more flat and thin. *Shah Jahan Dreaming* (plate 45) has atmospheric space rather than flat divisions, creating an effect of mood. While the equestrian figure in the foreground is sharply delineated in clear details, the space behind is shrouded in fog probably to suggest the emperor's reverie.

An effect of a mood is also there in the *End of the Journey* which is again a "hazy" painting (plate 44). The exhaustion of a long journey is depicted by the way the camel is beginning to collapse and also appropriately the sun-set in the background. Thus the "end" is suggested by the fading of the day (or the approaching night) and by the passing away of life (or oncoming death). These are, therefore, literary paintings with "suggestive" meanings and explain perhaps what he meant by paintings infused with *Bhava*. "In art, the action of *Bhava* is to give *rupa* their proper attitude, and the action of *vyangya* is to reveal the mind and the meaning concealed behind the everchanging veil of *rupa*."<sup>43</sup>

The figures in *Kajari Dance* (plate 48) are not outlined yet it is also two-dimensional. Based on an Orissan folk dance, as described by Abanindranath in his *Jorasan-kore Dhare*, it has a rapid rhythmic movement unlike many of his paintings. In the paintings discussed above, although they all have subtle nuances of colour, there is always a dominant colour tone—in *Shah Jahan Dreaming* it is brownish pink, in *Kajari Dance* it is umberish terra verte.

*Tissarakshita* (or Queen of Ashoka) (plate 49) is a historical subject in which again a mood in literary sense is depicted. The intent gaze, arched eyebrows and the right hand clasping her lips and chin suggest brooding anger. The "flavour" of the period is suggested by the Sanchi type railings in the background including the lotus motifs. The face, hands and jewellery are clearly outlined revealing a firmer draughtsmanship. This painting is much more linear and two-dimensional than any other of the same period, coming nearer to the linear stylization of Ajanta. This is important to note for he wrote a treatise on Indian anatomy about the same time (1915) which he rarely followed himself.

#### "Phalguni" Phase

For B. B. Mukherji, some of the paintings already discussed, represent a phase where Abanindranath's figures have a heavier quality.<sup>44</sup> From the above analysis it is clear that it is not so. Largely, Abanindranath was never concerned with illusion of volume, so the



word "heavy" is not appropriate, for it connotes weight and gravity, which are absent in his figures. Instead, the suitable word could be "dense." Such an effect of density is found in a series of paintings from 1915, namely the *Bengal Actors* set and that based on *Phalguni*. The actors (plate 50) are also outlined but their somewhat jaggy contours following the natural breaks and undulations of the human silhouette, together with tone gradations give them a heaviness distinguishing this set for being neither too literary nor overtly delicate. They also have a richer colour.

In the *Phalguni* set is represented Rabindranath as he appeared in this play (staged in 1916) as a singing bard (plate 54) and also as a dancing mendicant (plate 55). Here again the contours are sharp but not outlined. The distinct and varied colour washes and their tones are applied with masterly control. The pronounced brush work and tonal gradations give the figure a dense quality. Carefully placed touches of highlight add to both the density and the expressiveness of the image. The rhythmic movement in *Tagore dancing* is built up through the interplay of the shape of the contours and the direction of brush strokes. There is a *Peacock* of the same period in similar technique with an unusual composition where the vainest of the feathered vertebrates asymmetrically occupies the left half of the painting with its plumed majesty. (plate 53) All these paintings have dark background suggesting nocturnal space and adding to their quality. This set is unique in Abanindranath for their compositions and free handling of water colour. His own words on the quality of brush work may be quoted here. "To make the brush go flying and sweeping over the paper, to make your colours crystalize into joyousness or melt into tears, such are the practice of *varnikabhanga*."<sup>45</sup>

Stylistically, certain of the *Animal Life* set and that of *Playmate* series are akin to *Phalguni* water colours. But B. B. Mukherji puts *Animal Life* around 1915/16 and the *Playmates* at 1925. In these paintings are found two types of signatures, Bengali signature in Persian style and upright signature in single Devnagri letters. To separate them signature-wise gives us sets in mixed technique so that either we have to assume that both types of signatures were used at the same time or that both the styles were used simultaneously. There are paintings like dog, (plate 59) crocodile, (plate 58) vulture (plate 94) which have dark background and similar free handling of water colour as in *Tagore dancing*. Then there are others where the tonal gradations are too hazy or the background is of a lighter tone resembling Japanese animal paintings. (plates 55 and 57) The *Vulture* is an imposing work in dark masses which shows how far Abanindranath had travelled from the minutiae of the Mughal birds he was so enthusiastic about in the beginning of this century. (Compare with plate 95)

At this time Abanindranath also tried his hand at caricature as in the illustrations for Rabindranath's satirical play, "Parrot's Training." (plates 51, 52) Abanindranath was not to be prolific in this genre like his elder brother Gaganendranath who also began his caricatures at this time. Abanindranath relies here on the distortions of human proportions to evoke the comic. But graphic satire was not his cup of tea.





## Landscapes

Towards the end of the second decade he did a large number of landscapes which are probably his last. A great many of them are from Shahzapur in Bihar, where they had their family estate. There is an earlier undated landscape (plate 60) where water colour is handled in Impressionist manner—rather like Boudin and again like him it is a seascape.<sup>46</sup> But the moonlit landscape from the Impression series (plate 61) is, in its use of water colour and the nocturnal effect, close to *Phalguni* paintings. The contrasting reflections of moonlight on water very dramatically add to the frightening quality of the panoramic expanse. Probably it is the one mentioned by Mukul Dey as *Moon rise at Massouri Hills* (1916).<sup>47</sup>

Shahzadpur landscapes, on the other hand, are inevitably rain-drenched river views, bathed in mist and haze, evoking always the effect of winter or autumn. (plates 62, 63) Several of them show boats tied to trees along a river bank. In one of them the motif of the bridge and the silhouetted form of a bird perched on a pillar under it, is very Japanese. Although these paintings can be classed as Impressionist yet they contain visible objects in distinct contours, it is only the individual details which are blotted out. In spite of several discernible colours the overall effect is monochromatic.

## Late Phase—1920s

The decade of 1920s is prolific. Abanindranath was in his fifties now. He worked on several types of subjects including portraits. Certain paintings are again compositionally akin to Japanese. But the decade culminated with the major series of paintings based on Arabian Nights in which there is a return to compositions of Indian prototypes.

First may be discussed the *Bhutia Girl* (plate 65) and the *Chinese Traveller*, the latter was exhibited in 1921. Since both are akin to each other they must be from around 1920. B.B. Mukherji puts them between 1925 and 30. Although they are mature works they relate to the earlier works like the *Banished Yaksha* in the renewed interest in filling up of individual details. Now, of course, the detailed passages (e. g. foliage)—and plane areas—(like that of the drapery), are juxtaposed with greater discretion and sophistication. In the *Chinese Traveller* (plate 64) the figure is light but the boulder behind him is solid and majestic. In both of the paintings colour is very chaste.

Three other paintings of single female figures may be noted from the early 1920s. They are all based on the kind of Japanese painting of a dancer where also a single figure is laid on plane background. (plate 67)

The first, *Woman with Gold Necklace*, (plate 68) has dark background and colour washes to some extent like *Phalguni* set. The rather dainty figure is in middle tone gradually becoming lighter towards the facial profile, the tonal variation thus surging into a musical crescendo. Face is delicately rendered but the dress has no details. The *Japanese Dancer* (plate 66) is more linear with even emphasis all over, like its





Japanese counterpart. However its movements instead of having a rhythmic flow are awkwardly contorted. More charming and less stylized is the little painting *Malini* (owned by Pulin Sen, reproduced in Prabasi, Vaisakh 1326). It is both in wash and opaque colours. The drawing of the exposed parts of the body is delicate against bold brush work of the sari folds. (plate 69)

Three other paintings, again of figures but what can be called "character" studies, have again their prototypes in Japanese art. The *Broken Flute* (plate 70) is a melancholic figure with characteristic hand gestures echoing the Japanese mendicant (plate 71). However, Abanindranath's figure appears much more monumental and large, a quality found in very few of his works. The two paintings *Zebunnissa* (exhibited Dec. 1921)<sup>48</sup> and *Nur Jahan* are an attempt to portray how these two personages were known in history. (plates 72, 73 and 74) In an article on *Zebunnissa*<sup>49</sup> the over-cultivated poetess is supposed to have been a bold woman who changed many lovers in the process of conspiring against Aurangzeb. Her stern expression and frail body are depicted here in monochromatic tones and elegant but tense lines. On the other hand refined washes and enticing expression delineate the diabolic beauty of *Nur Jahan*.

During the decade of 1920's Abanindranath Tagore did a number of significant portraits which include the famous Tagore, Gandhi, Andrews trio.<sup>50</sup> Here are discussed *Aurangzeb* (plate 75) (exhibited 1921), *Andrews* (exhibited 1925) (plate 77) and *Rabindranath* (reproduced in Tagore's 70 years souvenir of 1930) (plate 76). *Alamgir* is of large size on cloth in outlined washes of colour, a sad melancholic figure. *Andrews* does not have outlines but is built up in subtly merging tones giving a roundness to the thoughtful bearded face. The portrait of *Rabindranath* is in pastel and looks forward to Abanindranath's later work in its bold handling of pastel. It is a highly worked out head with tone and sharp highlights. It is, thus, the only head by Abanindranath which is solid, three dimensional and heavy. There is no soft merging of pastel strokes as in the first portraits (plates 15, 16) where the touches seem deliberately smudged. The combination of bold touches and smudging is found in another female head which is the only pastel portrait by Abanindranath that assumes the effects typical of his water colours.

Towards the end of the decade Abanindranath was preoccupied with the *Arabian Nights* set. It was after a long break that he returned back to a theme from literature of the romantic past. B. B. Mukherji places them in the year 1930, Mukul Dey in 1928 while some of them are dated 1930.<sup>51</sup> But since they are as many as 45 in all and some of them in large size painstakingly delineated, it must be assumed, they are not the work of one year but at least of two years, and 1930 must be taken as post antiquum (plates 78, 79, 80, 82 to 85).

They also signify a return to Mughal or broadly speaking, Indian compositional types. They are elaborate in their structure, colour and texture. Various compositions remind of Mughal, Kangra and Persian types. The flattened architecture reminds of Kangra (plate 81) and the way space is shown vertically is Mughal. In some,



the grouping of figures and detailed portrayal of heads is also close to Mughal. He puts in some of them so many figures and objects yet the effect is not cramped. They are in uniform style except a few where instead of the background of flattened architecture, it comprises of landscape setting, in which the figures, tree, rocks and horizon are diagonally aligned rather than being parallel to the picture plane as in the rest. (plate 85) But on the whole the flat composition and the realistic detail do not appear incongruous. The haze of wash contributes the integrating effect. Generally the colours are warm and rich possessing a velvety denseness.

### Masks

Related to portraits and his general fascination for character studies are the series of masks Abanindranath executed before and after 1930 in various techniques and types.

These heads are usually demarcated all around in such a way that there is no suggestion that they rest on a human torso. Certain of them have mongoloid physiognomy like stumped nose and slit eyes which may have derived from Japanese prototypes, in particular those in charcoal with smudged tones (plates 88 and 89). Those in thin washes and lyrical outlines are based on the play *Tapati* (plate 91) while the ones in rough and bold strokes look forward to his work of the late 1930s. A few of them are surprising in their grotesque quality, something incompatible to Abanindranath's taste, which may have been done under the inspiration of Rabindranath's paintings of early thirties. Here their works converge but briefly (plates 86, 87).

Here mention may be made of a painting, of a weird human figure (dated 1942) which is an extremely uncanny image to come out of Abanindranath, based on his *Kutum Katum* toys (plates 92 and 93). Created from found objects, generally roots or branches of trees, adjusted here and there to resemble some animal or human form, it was a playful hobby he resorted to around 1940.<sup>52</sup> This is an aspect of change in his old age to be noted in relation to his last phase of creative activity.

### Late Phase—1930s

Between 1930 and 38, Abanindranath did not do any important painting. But rather spent his time in writing jattras or folk dramas. He took his themes from *Mahabharata* and other *pauranic* stories in their popular versions. During 1938 he suddenly was seized with a fresh inspiration to paint. There are three major series—the *Kavikankan Chandi*, *Krishna Mongal* and *Hittopadesha*.<sup>53</sup> Almost all of them are dated and done between June and September in the sequence listed above.

B. B. Mukherji calls them 'Pat' paintings. Out of the three, the *Kavikankan Chandi* set indeed do resemble the Bengal folk paintings but they are not intended in any way to be pastiches of the folk idiom (like Jamini Roy). In them inspiration is taken of the simplicity and minimum pictorial means of folk painting. They are carefree work rather than careless work as observed by B. B. Mukherji.<sup>54</sup> Since its theme is mainly gods and goddess the *hieratic* way of placing the images in a horizontal composition is appro-



priate. (plate 98) However the divine image is never made larger than that of the devotees flanking it. The lines are not stiff and continuous but more spontaneous almost like brush strokes. The lines are in many tones and colours, saving the images from the rigidity of folk paintings.

The *Krishna Mongal* paintings illustrating episodes from Krishna's boyhood, are even bolder in their brush work and compositions (plate 97, 99). They are not symmetrical unlike the *Kavikankan Chandi*. Usually images are large, placed very close to the picture plane, even getting abruptly slashed by the edges of picture surface. This gives them a forceful and dramatic effect enhanced by the spontaneous brush work. The way the figures are arranged in relation to picture surface have an inevitability about them. There are no elegant contours and delicate lines. But thick brush strokes in dark tone softened by brush strokes of lighter tone, on either side of it, giving a suggestion of roundness but not heaviness. The theme of conflict, Krishna's attempt to overcome his adversaries, is very well brought out by the direction and placement of limbs in relation to each other and the mutual visual tensions generating out of it. In this way some of them rise above the level of illustration. Their unusual compositions are particularly to be noted because there is no attempt to incorporate Indian elements as he often did before and also since the Krishna theme was profusely illustrated by the Kangra painters in the past.

A surprising degree of spontaneous and carefree but colouristic brush work is also found in what are probably Abanindranath's last paintings, the two versions of *Poet's Funeral* done in 1942, as recollections of Rabindranath's death. (plate 101) They are dashed off in swift variegated colour patches. These two could be called expressionist as done in a fitful and emotional state, the only work of its kind in entire oeuvre of Abanindranath. Could we say here he reached the ultimate realisation of what he had considered his aim at the beginning of this century, to bring in the emotional element in the painting?

Finally the question is in what way are the last set of paintings related to his whole output. Should they be considered the last flowering of his style—the “ultima maniera”—as has been observed in the case of such masters like Titian or Rembrandt or even as we shall note in the case of Gaganendranath and Rabindranath? According to B. B. Mukherji<sup>55</sup> they are in no way continuation of his previous work. I think it is not entirely so. He was always interested in line and the *Phalguni* set does have a certain spontaneity in brush work wherein the brush marks are not always merged and are very often left distinct. Moreover they also point to the renewed interest in Far Eastern calligraphy that had taken place at Shantiniketan during the thirties. Nandalal Bose also had painted in this decade figure compositions built up in spontaneous brush work. (plate 105) In the late nineteen thirties, the young Binode Bihari Mukherji, also began his calligraphic experiments where broad patches of colour serving as middle tone were juxtaposed with



quick contour lines together imparting the effect of monumentality to his figures<sup>56</sup> (plate 106).

Perhaps the paintings of Gaganendranath of late 1920s and that of Rabindranath of the thirties and even the freshness of approach among the younger artists from his own orbit made him realize the outdatedness of his earlier style and urged on by these winds of change he produced his own late works.





## GAGANENDRANATH

### Contemporary evidences of Gaganendranath's painting activity

The general impression about Gaganendranath Tagore has been that of a dilettante—an amateur—though a brilliant one for that matter. But the fact has been missed that in his later years he became a seriously involved painter and this fact has not been taken into consideration for the purpose of evaluating his artistic contribution. One recent critic has even called him an incomplete artist, and according to another he failed to achieve greatness due to his fundamental amateurishness as a painter.<sup>1</sup> It is true, however, that he started painting rather late in his life, probably around 1905 when he was 38 years old. While in earlier years his painting activity is sporadic, the entire decade of 1920s is his most prolific and creative period. Yet it should be noted that he was active for nearly 25 years till 1930 and persistently continued to paint with relentness. There are nearly one thousand extant works including sketches, drawings, ink and watercolour paintings, numerous of them are known to have been lost. Contemporary reviewers, i.e., around 1914, spoke of him as a brilliant amateur<sup>2</sup> while in the press comments during the entire decade of 1920s his greatness, his originality and uniqueness is again and again emphasised, implying that he is now regarded as a serious painter.<sup>3</sup> An analysis of his entire work from early phases to the later ones also amply bear it out as to how seriously involved a painter he had developed into. As happens with most great artists who are ahead of their times only a handful of close associates had realised the amount of this involvement in Gaganendranath. This gradual development then, from an amateur to a dedicated painter, is a crucial aspect of Gaganendranath's life.

The first problem that one confronts, then, in order to understand his creative endeavours is the extent of this involvement which needs fresh and detailed examination. For this purpose it becomes imperative to work out the chronology of his oeuvre and the pattern and nature of his development which might serve as a useful and necessary basis for interpretation as well as evaluation.

His chronology and development pose many problems befitting art-historical investigation. Only a handful of his paintings bear a date while great majority of them are undated. The catalogues of exhibitions that were regularly held by the Indian Society of Oriental Art during the second and third decades of this century in Calcutta would have been a helpful source for reconstructing Gaganbabu's chronology but these catalogues are not traceable. In the same way we do not possess a full biographical account of him and his activities like there exists for his more famous brother, Abanindranath.<sup>4</sup> Again unlike



the latter Gaganendranath never indulged in introspective or confessional writings. There is only one recorded interview of him by Kanyalal Vakil in 1926 which unfortunately is not illuminating enough.<sup>5</sup> We hardly then know how he thought and felt about his art which is particularly distressing and further complicates the problem of interpreting his creative intentions. It seems that Gaganbabu was a painter most supremely indifferent to the value of his own creative genius as was noted by Rathindranath.<sup>6</sup>

Short accounts of Gaganbabu's life were written by his contemporary Dineshchandra Sen,<sup>7</sup> who was a literary historian and friend of the family, and by his younger cousin, Rathindranath.<sup>8</sup> The latter is more reliable and helpful because of the author's intimate relationship with his painter cousin. Writing about the period after 1910 when he returned home after finishing his education in America, Rathindranath mentioned that painting was still only an occasional hobby with Gaganendranath. According to him his cousin was probably inspired to paint by Okakura and other Japanese artist friends. The illustrations for Rabindranath's 'My Reminiscences' were painted by Gaganbabu on the insistence of the Poet's son who considered them as the artist's earliest published drawings. Continuing further Rathindranath mentions the cartoons and the Himalayan landscapes, done mostly from Darjeeling, which the painter visited frequently during the years of Bichitra Club (1916-20), in the formation of which Rathindranath had also been instrumental.

Strangely enough both Rathindranath and Dinesh Sen have omitted the Cubistic pictures from their account of Gaganbabu's painterly pursuits. Sen also omits the Japanese pictures but gives a detailed account of his caricatures, portrait sketches and sketches of *Kathak pundits* and *Sibu Kirtanya*. He also mentions the pictures of Chaitanya lila and other paوران themes. He concludes by making an important observation that Gaganbabu's principal occupation was, of course, painting.

Additional information on Gaganbabu's work is given by O. C. Ganguly, who was the close collaborator of the Tagores in their activities connected with the Indian Society of Oriental Art. He mentions, in his obituary of the artist,<sup>9</sup> the publication in 1911 of a set of brush drawings of animal and figure subjects—mostly studies of crows and pandas of Puri. These are noted by him as the artist's earliest works.

Pratima Devi (Rathindranath's wife) in her recollections has observed that Gaganbabu started painting cubist pictures during the Bichitra years (1916-20).<sup>10</sup> At any rate references to his cubistic experiments abound in the newspaper reviews of the 1920s<sup>11</sup> referring to them as his latest manner while his Japanese style paintings and Whistlerian sunsets and nocturnes are referred to as earlier works. Among the few dated pictures there are portrait sketches, 1907, sketches of *pundits* and *Sibu Kirtanya*, 1911, cartoons dated between 1917 and 1921, finally some cubistic pictures dated between 1923 and 1925.

On the evidence of the reports of contemporaries, the dated and datable pictures, and the internal evidence offered by the stylistic analysis of the pictures themselves a broad stylistic sequence of phases could be inferred as follows :



### First (early) phase—upto 1911

Puri landscapes, portraits and other figure sketches, scenes from Calcutta and illustrations for 'My Reminiscences,' some of them in Japanese brush technique.

### Second Phase—1911-1915

*Chaitanya* series and other related paintings done from imagination including the *Pilgrims* series, most of which are done in black ink (SUMI-E). Night scenes and paintings on gold paper may also belong to this phase.

### Third Phase—1915-1921 (Bichitra period)

Most of the caricatures and the Himalayan paintings.

### Fourth phase—1921-1925

Cubistic experiments in colour and black ink.

### Last phase—1925-1930

Post-cubistic paintings mostly in black and white.

Cardinal points in his development are (i) the involvement with Japanese technique, (ii) the confrontation with Cubism and (iii) the highly personal and complex imagery of the late pictures. In the following pages it will be my endeavour to present all the available evidence and the relevant arguments for upholding the above sequence of phases and suggest pattern of evolution and growth of his style.

### Early sketches

The earliest dated examples of Gaganbabu's paintings are of 1907 in the form of post cards sent from Puri to his daughter (plate 108).<sup>12</sup> These comprise of seascapes done with few quick brush strokes and thin washes of colour. By these minimum means the vast expanse of sea and soft atmospheric light is evoked. In this context must be noted the training Gaganbabu received under Harinarayan Bandopadhyay, an accomplished water-colourist in the British school.<sup>13</sup> The other possible earliest works are pencil portraits in the manner of Jyotirindranath. In fact it seems likely that Gaganbabu began his career by following in the footsteps of his uncle with whom he was very intimate. Jyotirindranath, (for his portrait sketch by Gaganendranath see plate 109)<sup>14</sup> who had also been the inspirer of his own younger brother, Rabindranath, was the first in the Tagore family to take to drawing. He had received formal lessons at the Art School at Bow Bazar, where the present Government College of Art had functioned during the days of its inception.<sup>15</sup> By 1900 he had achieved considerable skill in the handling of pencil and had made numerous sensitive renderings of the heads of many of his relatives with a feeling for character. Even that well-known British painter Rothenstein, who himself was a good draughtsman, appreciated them and arranged publication of them to which he contributed a sympathetic introduction.<sup>16</sup> Jyotirindranath had a characteristic manner of handling the pencil with nervous and curved hatchings. (This is rather unusual as generally painters use straight hatchings when handling pencil). In the pencil portraits by Gaganbabu the hatchings are



very similar to those found in elder Tagore's drawings. (Compare plates 110 and 111). Later we shall see that Gaganbabu's use of pencil changed and he preferred a firm contour rather than a broken nervous outline. In these early drawings a certain crudeness is present compared with the more competent drawings which exist as preparatory sketches or studies for the *Chitanya* pictures. (e.g. plate 138).

In this period (i.e. before or around 1910) also fall the sketches both in pen and ink and in pencil of *pundits* and *kirtankars*. We are told of the incident of the death of his elder son, the shock of which cast a great gloom over the family and in order to provide a congenial diversion kirtans and kathas were arranged where Gaganbabu made these sketches.<sup>17</sup> Unfortunately, no-one has given the date of this tragedy. This lacuna is lamentable because it is reported as the beginning of Gaganbabu's interest in the practice of art. A descendent of the artist has given the date of death as 1903<sup>18</sup> but the drawings must certainly date from about 1910. A few of them are dated 1911, and they form a closely related stylistic group so that they could not have been done over a longer period of time. One of the drawings from this set is that of *Sibu Kirtanya* which was published in 'Jeevansmriti'.

The lines in those drawings which are in pencil are hesitant and heavy with dark unmodulated hatchings for shadows as in plate 115. They do not betray the kind of finesse that can be seen in e.g. the head of an old man (*Jagdish Mama*) dated 1907 (plate 112). (Some of the pencil drawings, incidentally, seem to have been touched or improved by another hand, giving rise to the question of authenticity). Between 1909 and 1911 are numerous portrait sketches in extremely spontaneous brush lines, touched with tones, where both the line and tone excellently fuse with each other suggesting volume as well as enhancing character. They are bold, show great control on the brush and tone and in the human physiognomy. (The boldness and control are explained perhaps by bearing in mind about 20 years of dabbling in water colour since his school days). About these Sen has rightly observed: "His speciality lay in the perspicuity of the facial expression and of the inner state of mind of the person portrayed."<sup>19</sup>

*Coomaraswamy's* profile (plate 113, dated 1909) has chiselled aquiline nose, deep set slit eyes and emphatic dark dense mass of dishevelled hair portraying him as a young man during the period he was a collaborator of the Tagores. (There is also a small sketch of him wearing a turban by Abanindranath, probably of the same date). There is another forceful head of an old man in much freer brushwork dated 1911 also representing *Jagdish Mama* (plate 114). This technique of his portrait sketches, although naturalistic, is yet quite characteristic, so that once one sees one of these heads it is unmistakably distinguished in other examples. Already also they bear the qualities of extreme simplification, rarefied essentials, absence of decorative and superfluous detail, quite unlike the Mughal inspired portrait technique of Abanindranath of the same period. Throughout, Gaganendranath has remained wedded to these traits. The naturalistic brush strokes later on got transformed to give them a firmness and tautness as discussed on page 96. The effects found in his portrait profiles (i.e. the *ek chashm* ones), in particular, may have been inspired by certain



photographic techniques of that time explained in a book of instructions he owned, titled "Crayon Portraits", inscribed with his signature, bearing the date 4/12/92.<sup>20</sup>

### "Jeevansmriti" paintings and grappling with Japanese technique

We now come to another documented group of his works—the illustrations for Rabindranath's autobiography in Bengali, "Jeevansmriti", published in 1912.<sup>21</sup> This gives a firm date to them. Again here some bear the date 1911. Here for the first time we come across some paintings which definitely derive from the Japanese brush technique. Mention may be made here of the well-known and recorded incident of Okakura's visit and his sending of two Japanese artists,<sup>22</sup> but it be noted that at no place do we come across the actual date of their visit. It cannot be established whether they came in 1903 (the date of one of Okakura's visits) or later.<sup>23</sup> But from the evidence of paintings the actual pre-occupation with Japanese type brushwork does not date before 1910. The date of the visit of the two Japanese artists would also, therefore, remain an open one. Though the significant point worth remembering is that the guest artists had given several demonstrations of their brush technique so excitedly narrated by Abanindranath<sup>24</sup> in which Gaganbabu was to be passionately interested later on.

The general enthusiasm for Japanese art among the Tagore circle can be gauged by the fact that the Oriental Society had brought together around 1910 a large collection of original examples of Japanese art for an ambitious exhibition.<sup>25</sup> The lecture that O. C. Ganguly gave on Japanese art, illustrated with lantern slides and later published in a 1911 issue of *Modern Review*, may have been delivered on this occasion.<sup>26</sup> Gaganbabu's direct acquaintance with Japanese painting may have been through this exhibition and also through the reproductions in the then famous albums of Kokka.<sup>27</sup> The "Jeevansmriti" ink paintings have several types of brushwork. Here are also discussed acuarelles not published in this book but either contemporary to them or done subsequently till about 1915. The fact that several types of techniques are used in them suggests that he worked in various manners all at the same time. Differentiating them from one another will enable not only to pin point them but also to observe how simultaneously he also attempted to synthesise them till a stage came around 1915 when he evolved his own approach to the use of SUMI-E.

First we may discuss those which could be called naturalistic (or Impressionist) akin to Puri landscapes with hardly anything Japanese in them. (This will help in distinguishing those in the latter technique). An example of this is the *Street Scene* (plate 132 similar to the version from "Jeevansmriti") depicting impressions of environs as received through eyes. For that is how this group of paintings could be characterised. Here quick patches of black ink silhouette the figures against the light tone of the street and atmosphere using the *trompe l'oeil* view-point i.e. there are larger figures (of beggars) in the foreground partially cut by the frame, then the bare-bodied fisherman in the middle and a diminutive buggy receding in the distance. Much more impressionist is one of the versions of *Calcutta Roof Tops* (plate 127) in which ink is spread like water-colour, graded from dark tones in the



foreground, becoming lighter and hazier towards the distance. Here black ink rather than colour is used to give impressionist effect of light and atmosphere. A superb pencil drawing exists delineating the roof tops by the linear perspective system which reveals his mastery and understanding of it (plate 126).

While both (plates 132 and 127) are done in black ink, *Women at the Banks of Ganges* (plate 125) is executed in his own version of impressionistic colour. There are merging washes (like Whistler as well as Abanindranath) but unlike them, there are also high lights and black touches along the contours to give some definition to the form and on the faces to suggest facial features. (Plates 127 and 125 are not from "Jeevansmriti" but must be between 1911 and 1915).<sup>28</sup> While this water colour has a monsoon effect there is another which actually shows pouring rain as in *Calcutta during Rains* (plate 130) but it owes much to Japanese technique. Here must be pointed out that impressionist effects of weather and the "fixed angle of vision" were given up later, yet the mastery of perspective was useful to him for depicting the spatial structure of his later compositions, like that of *House Mysterious* series (plates 190, 193).

In the same way, the "Jeevansmriti" illustration which looks forward to his later interest in the mystery of light and shadow is the one, the theme of which was taken from a description given by Rabindranath as quoted from his own English translation of it: "After nine in the evening, my lessons with Aghore Babu over, I am retiring within for the night. A murky flickering lantern is hanging in the long venetian-screened corridor leading from the outer to the inner apartments. At its end this passage turns into a flight of four or five steps, to which the light does not reach, and down which I pass into the galleries running round the first inner quadrangle. A shaft of moonlight slants from the eastern sky into the western angle of these verandahs, leaving the rest in darkness. In this patch of light the maids have gathered and are sitting on the floor close together, with legs outstretched, rolling cotton waste into lamp-wicks, and chatting in under-tones of their village homes. Many such pictures are indelibly printed on my memory"<sup>29</sup> (plate 129).

Oriental ink work is definitely used in plate 118 where the rich and dark tones of fluid ink are juxtaposed to bring out the effect of density and largeness of the gigantic banyan tree. (Compare it with the work of Japanese painter, Sesshu, plate 119). This is one of Gaganendranath's finest and powerful works of this period. Another exercise reveals a brushwork which is undoubtedly Japanese where leafy branches and foliage are depicted with characteristic oriental brush strokes called variously in Japanese BOKUSHOKU or TSUKETATE.<sup>30</sup> (Compare plates 120 and 124 with 121). Although the brushwork of leaves and foliage is easily recognisable to be oriental even in certain depictions of human figures and birds it is possible to distinguish the oriental brush treatment, the rice dot (BEI TEN) and the nail-head and rat-tail line (TEI TOU SOBI BYOU) as in plates 122 and 123. Gaganbabu's interest was not limited to only the brush technique of Japanese art but also the whole conceptual range of this art. This is particularly found



in certain very orientalising landscapes where it is not impressionistic space but the oriental vastness and infiniteness of space that is evoked. This can be observed by analysing examples from each of the two types. *Calcutta Roof Tops* (plate 127) and *Women at the Banks of Ganges* (plate 125) are impressionist whereas *The Ganges Again* (from "Jeevansmriti") has an oriental quality.

How deeply was Japanese spirit ingrained in his work can be gauged by noting the fact that Japanese painters always showed water in the landscapes; either water itself, sea, river, mountain stream, or water in the form of rains.<sup>31</sup> Gaganendranath also based his landscapes on the same scheme of heaven-man-earth (TEN CHI JIN) as did the Japanese (see *Calcutta During Rains* from "Jeevansmriti" plate 130). Also he has their simplicity and understatement, more being suggested than what was represented, 'leaving to the imagination to suggest itself the completion of an idea.'<sup>32</sup> For further parallels with Japanese landscapes compare *The Waterfall of Nachi*, Kase' School, (plate 161) with that of Gaganendranath (plate 160) which also contains similar motif of stream falling over a precipice. Also are juxtaposed his *Mountain Road* (plate 162) with *Rain* by Sansetsu (plate 163).

Both the above mentioned Japanese paintings (plates 161 and 163) were reproduced in Lawrence Binyon's 1908 edition of 'Painting in the Far East' which Gaganendranath would have certainly known.<sup>33</sup> Both of his paintings have the same grandeur and majesty of the mountains as in the Japanese counterparts. The landscape which comes nearer to its Japanese prototype in the use of characteristic brushwork for the depiction of trees is plate 133, which is compared here again with Sesshu (plate 134). Of course, the difference in format is there. The latter is a horizontal scroll portraying a whole countryside along a swollen river while Gaganendranath only takes up portion of a similar scene.

Another type of landscape found in Jeevansmriti is that done with thin washes of colour with minimum of tone and hue contrast, the entire looking almost pale grey as in *The Boat Padma* (plate 128). In it, it is sheer limitless expanse that is represented. This too is oriental but such landscapes could also have been inspired by similar ones of Whistler, who in his turn also derived such effects from a synthesis of Impressionist and Japanese techniques (plate 131). Gaganbabu's definite interest in Whistler is however more positively established when we see the slightly later landscapes of night subjects which were significantly titled *Nocturnes* which had been a favourite theme for Whistler too. But more about that later. Other adaptations by Gaganbabu of Japanese methods are (i) the sprinkling of mica dust on the painting surface and (ii) painting with black ink on gold paper, which particularly fascinated him.<sup>34</sup> One of the interesting examples of the later kind is a very simplified seascape in horizontal format which has a composition similar to those found on Japanese folded painted screens (plates 135 and 136). Gaganendranath continued to paint on gold paper with black ink later on also even when his style changed as in plate 141. Here mention may be made of one of his early caricatures (of c. 1917, plate 137) entitled *Hair Dressing in Bengal* which uses the men's coiffeur



to make a comment on the personality types of the Indian middle class of that time. It is based on a Japanese drawing in similar layout illustrating the varieties of male hairdo of that country, which appeared in *Modern Review* of Dec. 1916. However, the central emphasis with the skull inserted in the middle as the dominant context of contrast is his own.

To recapitulate this early and formative period of Gaganbabu's art activity, it can then be observed that his attitude was realistic. He aimed at representing direct visual experience on to the painting, either straight from nature or unfiltered even if transcribed from memory. He began with a broadly impressionist technique but depended heavily on Japanese technique and its variations. Thus it can be claimed that Japanese art played a great deal influence on his formative period, during the course of which he achieved a considerable mastery over the technique. Even the limited interest shown by Gaganbabu in colour also probably owes to Japanese art because there it is the black which is given emphasis, colour being considered as mere ornamentation.<sup>35</sup> In the handling of SUMI-E, Gaganendranath displayed all the skill, all the subtleties, that the Japanese expect from a master which is especially conspicuous in the two studies of crows, plates 116 and 117 (also comparable to Sesshu).

Further about this period it may be observed that inspite of the skill achieved by Gaganbabu they cannot be considered serious paintings though they are more than dabbler's work for which reason he was referred to as a brilliant amateur in those years. His realistic attitude and hesitation in exerting the imagination (in the romantic sense) are also noteworthy as during the second phase we find him attempting a series of serious paintings painstakingly designed and imaginatively conceived. In these, although recourse is taken to visual experience and its memory, but the result is far from naturalistic. These works are on the contrary highly emotional, high strung with ecstasy not possible without deep personal involvement with the themes and imagery. This leads to the discussion of the Chaitanya series.

### Chaitanya Paintings

These paintings are undated. Most probably they were done after the "Jeevan-smriti" illustrations i.e., after 1910. They were all exhibited in 1914 exhibition of Calcutta School held in Paris and London.<sup>36</sup> Almost all of them were listed in the catalogue—a very important document, as it is the first listing of the paintings of both Abanindranath and Gaganendranath till that date. Thus it can be safely surmised that none of the *Chaitanya* paintings date after 1914. They fill the years from 1910-1914 and would constitute his middle phase. However, it is likely that a few may have been done prior to 1910. There are 13 of them in all, representing episodes of Chaitanya's life from his birth and renunciation till his death.<sup>37</sup>

Why was Gaganendranath interested in the Chaitanya story? Partial answer to this is in the fact that his interest was aroused when *kirtans* were arranged for the family as a diversion from the shock of his son's death. Being vaishnavite by faith he may have felt drawn toward the personality of the saint which itself is a comment on Gaganbabu's mental



attitudes. Chaitanya's approach to religion—that of frenzied devotional ecstasy—may have also appealed to Gaganbabu which would show that there were mystic strains in his personality.<sup>38</sup> It would then seem that he had two faces—the outer one with which his friends were familiar, that of joviality, liveliness etc.<sup>39</sup> The inner self which came through his paintings was different. He continued to show the face of joviality till he fell ill in 1930 but as he grew older the mystic and introvert in him became more so, which is found in his later paintings for which the *Chaitanya* series provided the stepping stone. It is from now onward that his paintings and his psychic personality become inseparable and references to psychological values become inevitable. (Nirad Chaudhari was the first in 1938 to draw attention to the importance of psychological values in Gaganbabu's paintings).<sup>40</sup> Without this deep psychological involvement it would not be possible to explain his interest in the portrayal of Chaitanya's life.

Just as the *Chaitanya* paintings reveal Gaganbabu's first serious interest in the themes, in the same way they represent his first serious pictorial efforts. The existence of several preparatory sketches, both in pencil and in water colour, of compositions and postures of individual figures and the deliberate working out of the saint's image itself, lead us to believe so. The pencil drawing (plate 138) is probably a study for *Chaitanya prostrating before Vishnu's feet in ecstasy* (plate 139) though the final posture selected is more expressive and appropriate. As is explained in literature the saint is visualised as young, handsome, clean shaven with slender limbs. This image is characteristically a very personal one, not the least depending on either the Greek or the Indian canon of human proportions.

The earlier in the series are those which are more linear and closer to the style of Abanindranath, for instance, the already mentioned plate 139.<sup>41</sup> The one titled *Chaitanya and foot prints of Vishnu*, (plate 142) has some crude elements as found in the delineation of hands because of which it could be even earlier than 1911, although it is executed in similar sketching technique as found in *Pundits* of that date. *Chaitanya Prostrating before Vishnu's feet* has the use of curved lines of the kind which are typical in the contemporary works of his brother (e.g. *Omar Khayyam*, Canto II, plate 42) and in Art Nouveau.<sup>42</sup> However, drawing is vastly improved which is not at all feeble or tentative. While both in Abanindranath and Maurice Denis (plate 140) the lines have a lyrical flow Gaganendranath's lines are taut, applied more like firm though broken brush strokes. They do not trace a continuous contour but the sweep of the brush is halted at the bends and turns of the limbs.

The second group of *Chaitanya* paintings are those making use of Impressionist brushwork and broken colours. These are also rather more colourful than the rest. In fact, they happen to be among the most colourful paintings in his entire oeuvre. Neither in these nor in other ones do the compositions owe to Mughal (or any Indian) example, which is noteworthy and unusual to find an artist doing in the revivalist atmosphere. The individual figures and their groupings are semi-realistic. There is a feeling of openness,



of air and atmosphere not so much found in the earlier linear ones (See *Chaitanya Preaching* which exists in two versions, plates 143, 144). The brushwork is free and loose, contours are broken and on the whole great proficiency in skill is observable. In these, the figures have movement as in *Chaitanya Preaching* which is further heightened with the help of agitated and antipodal brush strokes in the one showing *Chaitanya Singing Ecstatically on the Street*. These paintings represent the culmination point of his Impressionist manner which had started with the earlier Puri post-card landscapes.

The third group of Chaitanya paintings which also seem to be the last in the series both stylistically and chronologically, are conspicuous because their compositions have many affinities with Japanese wood block prints. Because of this they are easily distinguishable from the earlier two stylistic groups. These represent another aspect of Japanese influence on Gaganendranath, that of Japanese figure compositions. In them he has avoided the feeling of atmospheric space (e.g. see *Chaitanya at the door steps of his Guru*, plate 145 and *Departure of Chaitanya*, plate 147). Figures, whether near or away from the picture plane, are of the same size, elements which should be in perspective view are put diagonally, like the motif of the wall. Space is viewed from a high point of view so that no horizon is seen. All these characteristics are found in Japanese wood-cut compositions as in plate 146. But unlike them instead of using colours in flat areas he takes recourse to monochrome washes. In fact in plate 147 there are combined Japanese compositional elements (note that the base line and that of the top of the diagonally placed door-way are parallel to each other) and swift brush marks merging with thin haze of wash, appropriate to evoke the effect of brooding melancholy in which are cast Chaitanya's wife and mother consequent to his departure.

### Pilgrims and Nocturnes

Now a problem arises regarding a group of paintings which are entirely done in black ink. A few of them continue the life of Chaitanya and also there is a group of them known as *Pilgrims* series.<sup>43</sup> In them ink is handled very dexterously incorporating the best qualities of SUMI-E where black suggests everything, even, colour, and particular attention is paid to pictorial problems. They seem to denote a further stage in the sequence not only due to greater technical mastery but also due to their formal complexity. They are less eclectic than any that have been discussed so far and are therefore first works which reveal Gaganendranath's individuality. That is also the reason for which a later date could be assigned to them. That they certainly form a consistent group is also borne out by the similar material and technique used throughout. They are all done in black ink,—no other colour is used—on a fixed size of special type of very absorbent Japanese paper, the surface of which is rough and grainy, which contributes to the peculiar effects that are found in them. (plates 156, 157 and 159) (There are a few in small size, plates 152 and 155. Plate 153 is done with tea water).

His approach to pictorial composition at this stage can be visualised by taking the example of *Chaitanya Knocking at the Temple door*. Fortunately it exists in several versions



including one complete pencil drawing of the whole composition. (plates 148 to 151). This also happens to be one of the finest pencil drawings made by the artist in which the earlier handicap in draughtsmanship has been overcome. On the basis of the pencil drawing another drawing with brush and ink was made followed by an incomplete version done in masses and washes of direct ink. The last has probably no preparatory outline and the entire painting is done directly displaying amazing control of ink and its gradations.

From now on we find progressively greater use of ink and more portions of picture surface covered with it. Then the relationship of blacks (or its variations) and whites is very specific, not only representing light and shadow but also denoting and defining space and volume. The shadows begin to take on a mysterious character. In fact the blacks appear both as shadow and cavern and therefore space. The earlier predilection for broken contour is replaced by a firmer yet 'clear-unclear' contour. The design too becomes more compact. So far many of his compositions give a 'floating' feeling but although the design becomes tighter, space takes on an infinite character. His compositions, predominantly centrifugal, now tend to take on centripetal characteristics. (plates 156 and 157) These qualities lead on and link up with the cubistic works of the 1920s.

Because of the infinite space and mysterious shadows these works can be called romantic. The romanticism becomes more pronounced in the late phase. Also now a definite shift in Gaganbabu's attitude is noticeable. He is no more concerned, like in the earlier works, with representing the visual impressions of the outer reality. But what now concerns him are his own feelings about the outer world and finding suitable and appropriate pictorial equivalents to them. The so called *Pilgrim* series are done entirely from memory and imagination, unlike the earlier landscapes.

Where to place the nightscapes—the *Pratima Visarjan* series (plates 167 and 168), *Temple at Night*, (plate 166), *the Festival of Lights*, *Santhals dancing at Night Around a Fire* etc.? These look forward again to the late works due to their 'luminism'. This group of paintings, although based on visual experience, are actually drawn from imagination, once again confirming the trend from depiction of outer reality to that of the inner world. In a way we can see Gaganendranath turning gradually from the depiction of landscapes in the day light to sunsets (evenings) on to the night effects. It is these pictures which reminded the contemporary reviewers of the parallels from Turner's and Whistler's sunsets and the latter's nightscapes.<sup>44</sup>

The luministic quality in Gaganbabu's pictures also reminds us of Rembrandt and other European Baroque luminists, Caravaggio and in particular George de La Tour. (plate 182) But of course there is a world of difference between these European painters and the Indian Gaganendra. In the case of the Baroque painters, simultaneously with light, they are also concerned with the substance and the volume of figures. In Gaganbabu the volumes get dematerialized, something that again leads on to later works. (The dissolution of form, incidentally, is also seen in Whistler, plate 169).



While we see a continuation of the fundamental preoccupation with light it should also be noted that here light is not treated as a natural phenomenon but is also bound up with the theme. Here the subject was not chosen merely because it represented an activity of the society to which the artist belonged but significant thing is that its depiction takes on symbolic overtones. (Conversely it may be noted that in Whistler the subject had no importance for he called his paintings 'arrangements').<sup>45</sup> Notice that in the *Durga Procession* neither the image of the Goddess nor the crowd are clearly delineated. The crowd merges in the total, all-pervading darkness, while the divine image appears as a cluster of specks of light. Did the artist wish to show the image as an apparition, a vision or as divine light in the sea of darkness? This again fits in with his deepening interest in profound subject matter and the search for suitable pictorial equivalents of it. The procession at night then is not an impression of it but what the painter has to say about it and feels toward it. It is not painted in black but mostly dark brown and blues are used with specks of yellow and orange which gives the picture a richness all its own. Most of the paintings of this kind were probably done around 1915.

### Confrontation with Cubism

Now we come to the knotty problem of Gaganendra's confrontation with cubism and what happened out of it. It is not certain as to how and when he came across cubism. The first series of cubistic paintings that we know of by Gaganbabu were reproduced in RUPAM in 1922, along with an article by Stella Kramrisch which are definitely referred to as cubist by the author who titled her article significantly as 'An Indian Cubist'.<sup>46</sup> Kramrisch had in the same year given lectures on modern European movements at Madras so she should have known what she was talking about.<sup>47</sup> The reviewers too referred to the work of Gaganendranath during 1920s as cubist and post cubist.<sup>48</sup>

It is very likely that the cubist paintings do not date before about 1920. As Rathindranath says, the years between 1916 and 1920 is the period of Bichitra established in Jorasanko. It was wound up when Rabindranath took permanent residence in Santiniketan and when the activities were transferred to the reorganised Oriental Society, both took place during 1919.<sup>49</sup> Perhaps there are fewer paintings dating between 1916 and 1920 because Gaganbabu was busy with his cartoons and their publication.<sup>50</sup> Also this is the period when he was equally busy with designing stage settings and costumes for Rabindranath's plays staged during these years which are also mentioned by Rathindranath. The profuse number of cartoons he executed and the numerous sketches and preparatory versions that exist for them and the preoccupation with stage, in which he was greatly interested, probably left him little time to carry out much painting excepting some landscapes of Himalayas which may date from this period as that is how Rathindranath refers to them.

However, that is not to suggest that these landscapes or these years in general are not of significance for his painting activity. How much his concentration on theatre decor at this time contributed to his later style will be discussed subsequently. But the quality



of "sublime" as found in his landscapes, achieved through the exploitation of scale, bringing out the celestial grandeur of the sacred mountains to which also contributes the way light is handled, ties up with his late post-cubist paintings. They have a "visionary" element as is said of, for instance, William Blake and Turner. The towering snowy mountain peaks shimmering in the glow of light suggested to Gaganendranath the profile face of Mahadev looking heavenward.<sup>51</sup> Here we have "visual-pictorial" (in contradistinction to "literary") interpretation of what Himalayas have meant to Indians through the ages. (see plates 180 and 181). These paintings not only indicate his frame of mind but also how far he had travelled from his "Impressionist" and "Japanese" days.

What is the justification to call the cubistic paintings so? Already we have referred to how the contemporaries regarded them. Also from those published in RUPAM we can present convincing comparisons with certain Futurist works, (see plates 174 and 175) those of Delaunay (see plates 209, 210 and 211) and the German Blaue Reiter painters, Franz Marc and Feininger (see plates 186 and 188, 215 and 217, 220 and 221). Also surprisingly there is a similar painting by the Russian Rodchenko. (See plates 215 and 216). Even Larianov and Goncharova's Rayonist works have resemblance with Gaganendranath's works.<sup>52</sup> (See plates 171 and 173, 203 and 204) These parallels are so striking that it is impossible to believe those who say that either Gaganbabu's works are not cubist or that they are superficially so arrived at independently. I have deliberately taken recourse to extensive visual juxtapositions here so that there is little room for argumentation. Moreover his own words may be quoted here (the only statement directly attributed to him) as given by Kanyalal Vakil when he interviewed the painter in 1926. "... (the new experiments) have enabled me to discover new paths and I am now expressing them better with my new technique developed out of my experiment in Cubism than I used to do with my old methods. The new technique is really wonderful as a stimulant."<sup>53</sup>

In my comparisons given above, I have significantly avoided the mention of Picasso's or Braque's cubist paintings. Their works of the "analytical" phase between 1909 and 1912 could be regarded as classical examples of cubism and used as frame of reference. They are predominantly analyses of volume and in them pictorial structures are based on horizontal and vertical elements. Gaganendranath shows a preference for the structure based on diagonal sections and instead of the repose of Braque they have the dynamic movement as in Futurist and other paintings named above. This is brought home by comparisons with Braque as in plates 186 and 189, plates 205 and 206. At the same time I must hasten to add that Gaganendranath was never interested in the idea of speed which was the basic tenet of Futurism. (The basically dynamic and animated character of Gaganendranath's first cubist excursions was recognized by Stella Kramrisch in her otherwise perceptive analyses of them, but she does not give the credit for it to the Futurists).<sup>54</sup>

However, with all these variations and adaptations of cubism mentioned above, Gaganendranath shared the fascination for the space-defining characteristic of inter-pene-



trating planes. The difference is that he is basically interested in 'light' and not 'volume', that is to say, the contriving of receding and protruding planes of negative and positive value, in such a way that they establish a relationship between light and space. His paintings plates 186 and 187 flanked by Braque (plate 189) on one hand and that of Feininger (plate 188) on the other, reveal how close he is to the latter painter who also was preoccupied with, not volume analysis primarily, but spatial atmosphere through faceted planes. Another comparison (plates 220 and 221) once again points out to their kinship. Feininger's painting (plate 188) was done in 1913 and there is a possibility that his work was known to Gaganendranath since he probably also had come across his caricatures which is suggested by comparing Feininger's *Die Morgen-Zeitung* (plate 178) with plate 177 of Gaganendranath. This aspect of Feininger is not much mentioned today but during the first decade of this century he had been a highly successful caricaturist.<sup>55</sup> Finally may be noted *The Dancer* of Gaganendranath (plate 173, published in Rupam, 1922) which is perhaps his only attempt at volume analysis where a human figure is fragmented in planes in the same manner as Larianov did his *Portrait of Vladimir Tatlin*, 1913-14, (plate 171). This delving into differences and similarities was attempted here in order to point out that Gaganendranath did not resort to "the direct application of the first principles of Analytical cubism" as unperceptively asserted by a recent critic.<sup>56</sup> Rather the above analysis indicates a selection, a deliberate choice, intuitively made by him. And this choice can be explained by referring back to where he had arrived so far and the kind of thinking he had developed at the point when the confrontation with cubism took place. We have already noted his growing interest in light and his persistent interest in space (and their mutual inter-relationships) from his early landscapes through *Chaitanya* and *Pilgrim* series to the *Himalaya* paintings. This explains the ease with which he moved from impressionism into cubism.

It is often said that Gaganendranath could not have known cubism. This is a surprising statement when we know how well-informed he was generally and about modern European art in particular. At that time the earliest publications of modern art were either in French or German, languages of the countries where modern art was born and being created. We are told that Stella Kramrisch had been pleasantly surprised to find Gaganbabu's library well-equipped with latest books on modern art.<sup>57</sup> He may have located "Du Cubism", jointly written by Albert Gleizes and Jean Metzinger in 1912, which was translated in English in the subsequent year and Appolinaire's widely known "Les Peintres Cubistes" of 1913. This could be a fair guess since in 1922 Indian critics had discussed Kandinsky's famous book 'On the Spiritual in Art' of 1912.<sup>58</sup> We also know that other than the few English friends, Gaganendranath's foreign contacts were predominantly continental, e.g., Andre Karpes, the French painter.

Here mention must be made of the exhibition that was arranged of modern German paintings in Calcutta as an outcome of Rabindranath's visit to Germany in 1921. The Bauhaus archive says it was arranged at his suggestion.<sup>59</sup> Ganguly claims that the idea was of Gaganendranath.<sup>60</sup> At any rate it was the Indian Society of Oriental Art which



sponsored the exhibition on a reciprocal basis. According to reviews in the *Statesman* and in *RUPAM* the exhibition was held in December, 1922.<sup>61</sup> It included mostly water colours and graphic prints of the Bauhaus painters—Feininger, Johannes Itten, Kandinsky, Klee, Gerhard Marcks and George Mueche. (A question arises whether Rabindranath visited this institute although he did go to Weimer. Also it reflects upon how enlightened the Tagore's were at that time to have heard of Bauhaus which had just been established in 1919). It must be noted that among them the most cubist works were those of Feininger. According to the Indian reviews some early works of the English painter, Wyndham Lewis, (plate 176) were also included in the exhibition<sup>62</sup> whose Vorticism was also derived from Futurism and Cubism. Stella Kramrisch's article on Gaganbabu's cubist paintings appeared before the Bauhaus exhibition in Calcutta. This proves that he saw original cubistic paintings only after having had its impact on his own paintings. It is very likely then that because he had already got interested in a certain type of modern European art which he wished to see in original, the initial suggestion for the exhibition may have been his.

What are the other sources through which he got acquainted with cubist language apart from certain art books? I think through theatre during the Bichitra years (1916-19).<sup>63</sup> There are two aspects here to be noted in the context of theatre. One is the 'lighting' and the other is the arrangement of sets. There exists an undated scenographic sketch which may date from this period (see plate 190). Here the sets are conceived in terms of over-lapping and receding planes. Such an approach to stage decor was conceived by Gordon Craig, (see plate 196) who was the leading revolutionary scenographer of his time.<sup>64</sup> It is possible that Gaganbabu was acquainted with his ideas through his books as we know Gaganendranath's character of keeping in touch with the latest ideas and trends.<sup>65</sup> He might also have been acquainted with some of the new ideas of leading Russian scenographers who were among the first to adopt cubist, Futurist and Constructivist ideas to stage decor<sup>66</sup> (see plate 195).

The new Russian approach to stage was known to the western world through indefatigable Diaghilev's presentations of "Russian Ballet" in Paris regularly from 1909 onwards in which Anna Pavlova had played leading roles. From about 1914 Larianov and Goncharova had permanently joined him as designers.<sup>67</sup> Pavlova was friendly to the Tagores whom she visited in Calcutta but we do not know the exact dates nor the circumstances leading to their friendship. Rathindranath implies it was during the days of Bichitra Club i.e. between 1916-1919.<sup>68</sup> Can we tie up Pavlova's visits with Gaganendranath's interest in theatre in general and new ideas to stage decor in particular? The name of Nicholas Roerich may also be noted here who also had made sets for Diaghilev and was known in India.

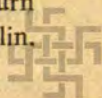
While plate 190 is a direct record of Gaganendranath's preoccupation with designing for stage (it has notes scribbled with pencil) there are a few paintings which relate to stage one way or another and may be taken as evidences of the lessons learnt through it. One



of them on gold paper called *The Coming of the Princess* is dated 1924 (plate 197). It is obvious that it was either planned for or inspired from stage props. In the middle is placed what seems to be the main character while the two doors in the back wall appear as part of the settings also to be used for entry and exit of actors. The vertical sections on either side clearly suggest lateral wings of the stage. Devices borrowed from stage are the overhanging frontal panels and use of wings to create depth in planes. There are also several black and white versions of this painting one of them being plate 224. Another stage-like painting is *Lamps* (plate 194) in which lamps are arranged along the curves of the composition consisting of spiral planes, giving strange effect of radiance. That both could be conceptions for scenographs is indicated by the empty space in the lower half probably as the venue for actors' performance. This painting has similar elements and motifs as in a photographic record of a Russian stage-setting (plate 198). It will be appropriate to mention here again the famous Russian artist-couple, Larianov and Goncharova, who during the second decade of this century, were passionately devoted to designing for the stage.<sup>69</sup> From the decoration of the wing panel of a setting the latter designed for "Loisseau de Feu" Gaganendranath may have borrowed motifs for a part of his "Dream Boat" (plates 201 and 202). Other parallels between them have been indicated earlier.

A new approach to stage also constituted in the use of lighting where more dark shadows were preferred and beams of light were thrown from various angles focusing on the principal characters. The light beams criss-cross each other, creating an effect of faceted planes, which form an integrated complex together with the opaque planes of sets and their cast shadows (as in plate 198).<sup>70</sup> Such a 'unified' or 'total' approach to scenography was also in air among the leading experimental theatrical establishments of which Gaganendranath might have got the wind.

Here again we have the lacuna of direct records of his stage preoccupations (a typical Indian phenomenon). But evidence exists of his interest in 'lighting' of the kind described above. I am referring to the paintings *Tagore reading his poem at the Congress session* (plate 179) and *Sir Jagdish Chandra Bose demonstrating his new apparatus* (plate 181). In *Tagore reading his poem* (believed to have been painted after 1917 Congress session) we see a beam of light being focussed from behind Tagore silhouetting his looming figure, making it appear large, though almost weightless, while the 'light' makes 'visible' the multitude below. There is a sketch (or first version of it preserved in Santiniketan) which is freer and Impressionistic but the final version is a bit formalised. In the other painting (which bears a date 1925, thus belonging to a later stage) the light is dispersed by means of shafts forming cubistlike planes. Thus the entire painting consists of intersecting planes of light juxtaposed with shadows. Or rather by such a juxtaposition a spatial structure is created so that blacks become dark recesses and not convex protrusions of volumes. From this were derived light effects found in his *House Mysterious* paintings (plates 190, 193 and the unpublished version in Santiniketan) which in turn happen to be similar in quality to the design for a back-cloth by Vladimir Tatlin. (see plate 191).





We must also take into consideration his early enthusiasm for photography when his interest was probably aroused in the play and juxtaposition of lights and shadows created by artificial means. Also we have already noted Gaganbabu's preoccupation with light in nature—the sunlight of the day time, the evening sunsets and the nocturnal light. Thus when he confronted cubism he had already developed his peculiar approach to light and the mysterious shadows. In terms of technique too we notice in his ink paintings (e.g. *Pilgrims* series) fascination for light and shadow—the whites of paper assuming the role of light and dark tones that of shadows.

Although relatively less concerned with colour his attitude to it was conditioned by that to light which he never used as a mere filler. He is reported to have been greatly interested in watching the phenomenon of dispersion and separation of spectrum colours in over-lapping streaks when beams of sun rays are allowed to pass through a prism. He would hold a crystal with his left hand against sunlight over a sheet of paper on which he would lay quick washes of colour tones of the same saturation as they actually dispersed through the prism on to the paper surface.<sup>71</sup> Probably this is how plates 212 and 213 have been done. Interestingly enough these two works come very close to one of the Rayonist paintings of Larianov, (plate 214) who had said in his Rayonist Manifesto, "The style of Rayonist painting promoted by us is concerned with spatial forms which are obtained through the crossing of reflected rays from various objects, and forms which are singled out by the artist."<sup>72</sup> From these exercises in colour Gaganendranath evolved his mode of intersecting colour planes he used in a highly abstract aquarelle, fig. 8. Similar colour planes are found again in his *Swarnapuri* (plate 183) and *Satbai Champa* (plate 209). The chromatic rhythms in these paintings are of great beauty. It is for fig. 8 we can say (like it has been said for Feininger's late work) that Gaganendranath attained 'the condition of music'.<sup>73</sup> (The marrying of cubist structure with colour planes—cubists had rejected colour—was first achieved by Delaunay in his *Window* of 1912 and through him the American Synchromists, Morgan Russell and MacDonald Wright. It is very surprising that an Indian critic, Abani Bannerji, in 1924, should have also mentioned such a parallel with the two American painters).<sup>74</sup>

The most typical and fully worked out paintings of the so-called cubistic phase from the first half of the twenties are the two versions of *Destruction of Dwarka* (*Swarnapuri*), the two versions of *Satbai Champa*, the cover of Rabindranath's play *Rakta Karvi* (*Red Orleanders*) which was published in 1925 (plate 203) and the maze-like painting in black and white in Kasturbhai Lalbhai collection. The last-named (plate 174) is perhaps earlier in the sequence because of its similarity with *Laughter* reproduced in RUPAM of 1922. To consider it and similar paintings as compositions of geometrical shapes (in this case black and white triangles) as B. B. Mukherji has insisted, is to misunderstand the painter's attitude.<sup>75</sup> Arrangement of black and white shapes would result in a flat two dimensional pattern. But in this painting the whites definitely appear as light and blacks as shadows so that spatial recession is definitely a part of its pictorial structure. This, incidentally, belongs to a small group of paintings in which a kind of abstraction is achieved, perhaps



unintentional, but of great historical significance for India. In such paintings the only 'object' represented is lights and shadows. This kind of abstraction is quite different from the several types of abstractions that developed in Europe between 1910 and 1920.<sup>76</sup>

One of the two versions of *Satbai Champa* (plates 205 and 209) is dated 1924. The two versions of *Swarnapuri* (plates 183 and 184) were probably also done at the same time. They are among the last pictures done in colour by Gaganendranath. They are more specifically related to Delaunay and Franz Marc, in their chromatic rhythms and in the use of colour planes as compositional units. Like Marc's and the early Romantic painters both these paintings are based on literary themes. The middle portion of *Satbai Champa* almost resembles the tower which is also placed in the centre as in Delaunay's *Eiffel Tower* (plates 210 and 211). Whereas *Satbai Champa* is a static and cold picture the *Swarnapuri* is very dynamic and the diagonal structure is appropriately used to portray the catastrophe that had befallen the ancient city of Dwarka as told in the puranas (compare it with a Futurist work of Boccioni, plate 185).

It is now possible to actually define in what terms cubism interested Gaganendranath and influenced him. He understood the structure underlying cubist paintings realising at the same time, how much of Indian painting of his contemporaries was devoid of it, being rather puerile and over-decorative. He agreed with the simplicity and stark essentials of cubism. He also realised that light and space, as expressive values, had never been used in Indian painting before. He sought to combine structure, stark simplicity of form, light, space and surface design in a coherent whole never achieved by any Indian painter thus far. At the same time the fundamental difference between cubism proper (as represented by Braque and Picasso) and Gaganendranath's experiments should be obvious now. Cubism consists of volume analyses in terms of interpenetrating planes and closely defined space through horizontal vertical structure.<sup>77</sup> In Gaganbabu, it is the light which he analysed in interpenetrating facets and instead of staticity of cubism he preferred dynamic movement.<sup>78</sup>

Again in his paintings the shadows are vibrating which appear mysterious because of minimum of details while the space assumes an infinite character—a quality which lingers on from his early work. This establishes the essentially 'romantic' nature of his work. In most Romantic paintings e.g. Turner's landscapes or Delacroix or Gericault's compositions, we find vibrating mysterious shadows and fathomless space.<sup>79</sup> Also the introvert mental character of Romanticists is shared by Gaganendranath which comes out to the fore pronouncedly in his post-cubist works.

### **The complexity of his post-cubist paintings**

The term post-cubist is first found being used by reviewers in 1930 thus not only indicating a change in his work but also pointing out to the fact that some observers too did notice this change.<sup>80</sup> The fact that change did take place in Gaganbabu's work after about 1925 also leads us to believe that he continued to experiment and was intuitively now able to define the course his research could possibly take after the brief cubist honeymoon.



Till he fell fatally ill in 1930,<sup>81</sup> when he had to cease painting, the work from about 1925 can be classed as a homogenous group and quite distinguishable from that of the first half of the decade. The fundamental creative problem of the later works could then be defined as the reconciliation of loose, 'floating' quality and the infinite space of his earlier manner as developed in association with Japanese painting, with the compact structure and closely knit spatial configuration of interpenetrating planes of cubism. Besides, these works are highly introverted with an element of phantasy in them so that their subjects are difficult to read and interpret. They have a profundity about them with highly personal and rich imagery, full of deep hidden meanings, which are a suitable subject for psychological analysis. This group of paintings, constituting his late manner, *ultima maniera*, also represent the culminating stage of his development where the earlier eclecticism is now thoroughly synthesised in an extremely personal style to become probably the first individualist in the country. It is on the basis of these that Gaganendranath's contribution both on national and on a wider level will have to be adjudged. It is here now he can no more be called a dilettante but indeed a serious involved painter.

The two versions of *Alladin* may be regarded as transitional paintings between the cubist and the post-cubist phases. One of the *Alladin* pictures is mentioned in an article in *Modern Review* of 1924<sup>82</sup> and one version (plate 218) was presented to Pearson in the same year according to the inscription behind it.<sup>83</sup> Thus their dates are established. In the painting the cave of the popular adventure story is given prominent place which is shown as physically receding space emphatically evoking the mysteriousness of the cave. Cave is also the motif of another painting (plate 225) which appears rather tunnel like through which a figure seems to be cautiously passing by. Several later paintings like the above ones are either based on fairy tales or mysterious characters from them.

A heightened effect of mystery is permeated through and through in the series called *House Mysterious*. There are several of them and the theme becomes quite enigmatic, something which is the hallmark of the late pictures. One version of it (plate 190) is patently theatrical in which there is a 'closed' space arrangement of shadows and shafts of light emanating through doors and windows creating a haunted interior. Spatial recession is further increased by depicting the foreground (comprising large portions of the picture surface) in shadow representing a sort of courtyard in front of the mysterious architecture. The steps seem to lead nowhere or into infinity, as it were, a recurrent motif from now on. The presence of the image of a cat at the door-steps (cat is also present in plate 197) adds to the haunting quality of the interior. Is it the dark interior of the mind or is it the universe, both of which remain fathomless mysteries into which it is not possible to penetrate?

Equally complex in its spatial structure are two versions of the interior of a room in which light penetrates through a window stylized into shafts. (plates 222 and 223) It is wrong to say that they are based on geometric perspective but an understanding of it is certainly evident in them.<sup>84</sup> They do not have the haunted quality to the same degree as



in *House Mysterious* paintings ( because of the presence of human figures ) but there is in them a "strange stillness" akin to Vermeer's *Woman with a Milk Jug*. Such a "strange stillness" is there in plate 224, which is probably a black and white version of *The Coming of the Princess*, dated 1925 but done on gold surface.

But the idea of movement is basic to plate 220 which seems to be a version of the theme *Flight of the Soul*, several of them are in free brushwork whereas the one illustrated here is cubistic and comparable again to Feininger (plate 221). The phantastic architectural complex establishes the 'spiritual' space through which traverses the departing "soul" in the garb of a draped form successively diminishing in size and varying in tone from white to black merging with the abysmal darkness. (Did he know about Marcel Duchamp's *Nude Descending a Staircase* which gave rise to much noise when displayed in the Armoury Show in 1913 at New York?) Does this painting (along with its title) suggest premonitions of the oncoming tragic attack of paralysis?

The exploitation of scale in *The Flight of the Soul* contributes to its monumentality as well as phantastic quality, which becomes frequent subsequently. These are equally emphatic in plates 230 and 231, in which not only phantasy dominates but also is involved the element of fright. The curved forms resembling temple roofs also look like mountains, as well as giant heads emerging out of water. In the left corner of plate 251 the shape looks like frontally represented gigantic nostrils. Once again scale is exploited—read as mountains the space becomes vast; as human heads, in comparison to human scale, they assume gigantic proportions. Such elements are associated with the evocation of the "sublime" according to Kantian interpretation<sup>85</sup> and are part of the "romantic" manifestation. I am juxtaposing here a view of Udaigiri cave, Orissa, where mountain rock is turned into a giant head. Fright and dark farbodings are also probably the theme of the painting depicting a huge bat-like creature hovering in the sky which is akin to the Goya etchings of winged creatures. (plate 387) Plates 227, 229, 226, 228 may be discussed here to analyse the genesis of the phantasmal. They naturally fall in a sequence from naturalistic (plate 227) to gradual fusion of reality and imagination in the rest. The temple form resembling Burmese pagodas become larger, replacing as well as substituting the mountains, while human figures are reduced to mere brush marks (plate 229) which altogether disappear in plates 228. While they are all in black or sepia ink, excepting plate 226 which is in very beautiful colour.

These lead on to more pictures comprising of dreamy interiors, phantastic architectural complexes, with groups of ghostlike veiled women ascending or descending spiral staircases leading into what appears like an abyss. Who are these women, anonymous, with no volume or substance but immaterial, rather like shadows? (plate 251) They look less human more phantom-like, but they also appear submissive—submitting to some super human force. Such a feeling of submissive helplessness is also present in pictures where gigantic mythical figures, supernatural beings, to whom the mortal humans seem voluntarily submitting themselves, appearing midget-like in front of the towering hovering

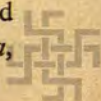


images. (plates 233, 236) Does the towering figure represent God and its dark expansive weightless form only an apparition? Is it again a comment on life, the human subordination and helplessness towards destiny? However, it must be noted that there is no tinge of pessimism in them. They are actually more serene and contemplative, possessing a detached gloomy melancholy, even a certain magical element. Could they also represent a comment on reality, that all reality is not perceptual but only a shadow, *maya*? Do they then reflect personal philosophical beliefs?

Another type of female is a recurrent veiled figure, vast and looming (plates 237, 244). Is it a goddess or a fairy? Another type is heiratic and frontally seated with frontal face, wide open eyes (plates 238, 239 and 242) reminding of the image of Durga, immersed at the Durga festival—scenes of which Gaganbabu painted a few years earlier. Yet another is a wrapped and veiled unidentifiable female figure riding on horse through the empty space of sky. (plate 255).

Who are all these women? They are not the gentle, delicate images of innocence and purity or of beauty like those painted by his contemporaries. They are unapproachable, formidable, one bows down to them, one asks for protection, mercy. One does not caress them for they are superhuman and not images of love. Are they goddesses? Could they be a personalised vision of the female archetype (using the Jungian interpretation)? Erich Neumann has said "The architypal image of the Great Mother lives in the individual as in the group, in the man as well as woman".<sup>86</sup> Presumably it is not the fertility aspect of the female but its protective and destructive aspects that are symbolised. That they are mother symbols is obvious in such representations where actually a child is shown in woman's lap (see plate 254). In its protective aspect it can be compared with the iconography of an Italian painting of *Madonna of Mercy (or Misericordia)* (plate 234).

In Gaganendranath the veiled woman is also stretching out her winglike arms in protective gesture. The fact that it spreads over and has suggestions of stars on its body makes it comparable to Nut, the Egyptian sky Goddess, which is also a protective symbol. (plate 235) That plate 239 represents the terrible aspect is indicated by juxtaposing it with an image of Kali, the Devourer (plate 241). They are partly like the sphinx which leads men astray. (plates 244, 243) They are the mother nature. They are the tremendous natural forces unknown to man but against which man knows he is helpless. They are fate to whom one submits oneself, to whom one pays homage so as not to incur her wrath. Are they indicative again of the premonition of the tragedy that was soon to befall on the artist? With regard to this may be noted how Tara is revered as "She who in the mind of all Yogis leads out (*tarani*) beyond the darkness of bondage, (as) the primordial force of self-mastery and redemption." Whereas on the lower plane she is a protectress and redemptress, *tarati iti Tara* (She leads happily across, hence she is called Tara), on the higher plane it is she who leads out of the world involvement of *Samasara*, which she herself created in her character of *Maya*.<sup>87</sup>





I would like to quote here Neumann's<sup>88</sup> definitions of the pictorial form of Mother as Fate and her terrible aspect ( which in Indian mythology are represented by Kali as well as Durga reflecting our own collective psyche ) which surprisingly sound as appropriate descriptions of Gaganendranath's imagery.

### *Goddess of Fate*

".....space is one of the most important projections of the Feminine as a totality..... But the Feminine is also the goddess of time, and thus of fate. The symbol in which space and time are archetypally connected is the starry firmament, which since the primordial era has been filled with human projections.....each one of these projections was experienced as a part of the life of the Great Goddess, who bears and encompasses all things. Accordingly, the Great Mother, adorned with the moon and the starry cloak of night, is the goddess of destiny, weaving life as she weaves fate."

### *The Terrible Mother*

"The negative elementary character of the Feminine expresses itself in fantastic and chimerical images that do not originate in the outside world. The reason for this is that the Terrible female is a symbol for the unconscious. And the dark side of the Terrible Mother takes the form of monsters..... In the myths and tales of all peoples, ages, and countries—and even in the nightmares of our own nights—witches and vampires, ghouls and spectres, assail us, all terrifyingly alike. The dark half of the black-and-white cosmic egg representing the Archetypal Feminine engenders terrible figures that manifest the black, abysmal side of life and the human psyche.

.....Thus the womb of the earth becomes the deadly devouring maw of the under world, and beside the fecundated womb and the protecting cave of earth and mountain gapes the abyss of hell, the dark hole of the depths, the devouring womb of the grave and of death, of darkness without light, of nothingness. For this woman who generates life and all living things on earth is the same who takes them back into herself, who pursues her victims and captures them with snare and net....."

Pictorially Gaganendranath's women remind of Leonardo's preoccupation with the mother theme (*Madona and St. Anne*) and the theme of woman as an enigma as in his *Mona Lisa*. As mother archetypes they remind of maternal sculptures of Henry Moore and of the primitive fertility fetishes. Their ghostlike weightless quality is similar to Rossetti's *Beatrix* (plate 248). They have the thinness and occasionally coquetishness of Japanese Ukiyo-ye courtesans (plates 246 and 245), they have the forlorn quality of the fin-de-siecle 'femme fatal' but not its cruelty.

There is a conscious attempt on the part of Gaganbabu to tap personal dreams as some paintings are titled such ( see *Dreamland* ). The preoccupation with fairy tales is also evident again from some of the titles. Also we have a record of some fairy tales he wrote at this time ( during late 1920s ) of which manuscripts exist. Revised version of these was published posthumously under the title 'BHAONDAD BAHADUR'.<sup>89</sup> In this there is



a vivid description of a fairy 'JOTER JOTEBUDIMA'—an old woman riding through the wind on horse back. This description actually fits one of the paintings (plate 255) which when compared with the 19th century painting *Erlkonig* (*Kind of the Fairies*) of a German Nazarene artist, Moritz von Schwind, (plate 257) suggests that it could be interpreted as spectre of death and in that sense it too has primonitive significance. It is structurally a more elaborate and closely knit painting among his last works in which scale is again effectively exploited if one notices the tiny little woman in the left corner at the bottom. Along with the *Flight of the Soul* it can be regarded as the final summation of his creative adventure.

The question of the preference of black ink in these late pictures is also significant and needs explanation. It might indicate the predisposition for simplicity of means and goes well with other choices of utmost simplicity of forms and absolute avoidance of any decorative detail, so that the image receives due prominence. The avoidance of any colour also helps in creating the atmosphere of mystery and gloom. It is obvious that colour would have been unsuitable and would have detracted from the artist's intention. In these paintings Gaganbabu shows himself a master of black and white, which can be said for very few painters in the world. The preference for black may also be due to his allegiance to Zen ideology. In this connection reference may be made again to Okakura's "Ideals of The East", in which the author had particularly explained the Zen aversion to colour. We could, therefore, surmise that the preference for black and white was already decided when Gaganbabu began painting in the Japanese technique. Initially the interest in black and white may have been aroused by photography which had been his most favourite hobby as a youth.

The female images of Gaganendranath are not literal symbols. Generally they do not have separate and specific attributes which might suggest the meaning like it is so in the image of *Kali* (plate 241). His images have physical, formal properties, as in plate 239—the latent vitality of the serenely majestic seated Mother absorbing the 'shadow' of man 'within' herself. Their symbolic meaning is comprehended by the kind of emotional response that is evoked through the perception of their formal properties. In this sense they are different from medieval European or traditional Indian images (which themselves stand as literal symbols) but more akin to say, Mona Lisa, because her meaning too is comprehended through what her physical properties provoke.

We have here in these works a personal mythology, at the base of which of course lies the collective unconscious. But the mythology that emerges is not pedantic, deliberate, collateral, but at once personal and individual. Therefore Gaganendranath is also the first Indian painter to create personal mythology by delving into his own unconseious. Thus he reflects the modern Indian psyche and belongs completely to the twentieth century. One cannot agree with Archer's censuring remark that there was 'an air of trivial irrelevance' and the absence of 'a vital quality' in Gaganendranath's paintings.<sup>90</sup>





## RABINDRANATH

### Beginnings and the Phases

It is a well-known fact that Rabindranath started painting in his old age. The exact date since when he took up brush and paint has not been worked out. The earliest work of course comprises of what have been termed as doodles or erasures. These are found mostly in his manuscripts of poems in the form of groups of unwanted words or whole lines covered with scribbles of pen often resembling some kind of grotesque images. Though such doodles have been traced as far back as in the first decade of this century, the fully documented and profusely filled manuscript with erasures is the one containing the collection of poems later published in *Purabi*.<sup>1</sup> It was published in 1925 and dedicated to Victoria Ocampo in whose house in Argentina he stopped for convalescence when he fell ill in the previous year on way to Peru.<sup>2</sup> It was during his stay there at San Isidoro near Buenos Aires that he wrote most of these poems. Victoria Ocampo herself has described how she saw the poet at work both at the poems and the erasures; "making lines that suddenly jumped into life out of this play; prehistoric monsters, birds, faces, appeared."<sup>3</sup>

In the *Purabi* manuscript, most of which is intact, are also a number of whole pages completely covered with erasures which do not contain just simply single images but consist of a well organized design satisfying all the laws of balance and harmony, possessing unity of theme and form. (plates 270, 271 and 274) Thus, there is reason to accept them as full-fledged works of art—whether one could call them paintings or drawings does not alter this fact. There also exists a page from *Rakta Karbi* which most likely dates from 1923 when he was working on the draft of this play.<sup>4</sup> This page too has a fully worked out and complex configuration and is more than just a single image. (plate 277)

Thus, it is completely unacceptable to continue to call them erasures or doodles. They are more than that. They should be taken as jotting of notes—sketches—and in particular the complete ones, as attempts to experiment with achieving unity of design to a satisfying degree. Most of the types of images which persist in his entire oeuvre are already, fully or partially, singly or in groups, present in these pages—goggle eyed creatures, beaky or with gnawing teeth, quizzical human heads, curvy sinuous snakes and also birds and human heads in angular stylization. The *Purabi* manuscript, therefore, could be taken as almost like a compendium of his imagery. If this point is clear, then it can be claimed that 1924 is the year when serious painting activity of Rabindranath began.



The other important landmark in Rabindranath's career as a painter is the exhibitions of his works held in many European cities ( Paris, Berlin, Moscow and Birmingham ) and in New York during the year 1930.<sup>5</sup> In that year, he had gone to Oxford to deliver the Hibbert lectures there. He had stayed with Elmhirst for some time and the latter had arranged for some bottles of ink and brushes at Rabindranath's request.<sup>6</sup> Elmhirst had also seen him painting. There are some dated paintings from that year and also the previous year. ( plates 290, 324, 344 and 375 ) In this case these were full-fledged paintings, independent from manuscript doodles. But between 1924 ( the year of Purabi ) and 1928, there is no dated painting nor an eye witness account of his painting activity. Do we then continue to believe the accepted view that Rabindranath started regularly painting from the year 1928?<sup>7</sup> It must be noted that as many as 400 paintings were brought along with him by Rabindranath for his 1930 exhibitions.<sup>8</sup> Could it be possible that all this was the work of about one and half years only? Do we also believe that he did not destroy any unsuccessful painting? Or that there did not exist more paintings which he did not wish to show. Thus it is possible that by June 1930, more than 400 works were in existence and a number of them were of a very large size.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, during 1928, 1929 and 1930, he was also occupied in many activities and foreign journeys.<sup>10</sup>

Therefore it is likely that he may have been painting even before the year 1928 i.e. although there may have been large intervals between 1924 and 1928 when he did not paint, otherwise he may have been painting fairly frequently. Incidentally, Pratima Devi has mentioned that he was painting in 1927.<sup>11</sup> This would mean that by 1930 Rabindranath had been painting for nearly 6 years and this may have given him the necessary confidence to take the courage of showing them in Europe. The full developed quality of the paintings shown in 1930 also presupposes a considerable period of time devoted to painting. We know that in an interview given in Moscow during his exhibition he did say that he was putting up his works for display so as to know the views and the comments of the critics.<sup>12</sup>

The question still remains unsolved as to since when did he take up painting independently from the manuscripts as there is no dated painting between 1924 and 1928. Though a manuscript exists of miscellaneous poems and songs containing erasures, for which he used a small desk diary of the year 1926.<sup>13</sup> The erasures in it may date from this year or subsequent year. But it is not possible to be precise in the absence of any other specific evidence. Another manuscript ( average size note book ) a page of which contains the date Sept. 16, 1929, has a few doodles but also half page or full page paintings in water colour.<sup>14</sup> Generally the doodles are found in poetry and not in prose manuscripts.

1930 is a date to be noted for other reasons as well. Here the early phase starting with his erasures came to a fruition. The works of these six years bear a uniformity so that they can be called his first period. Here also there are two groups, the manuscript doodles and those independent of the written page. From 1930 a gradual change is discernible but the paintings of the late 30s are very different. This is possible to observe



by following dated paintings year by year through the thirties as many dated paintings exist from these years. (plates 337, 338, 359, 365, 373) Thus, his whole output can be divided in three phases : first phase from 1924 to 1930, an intermediate phase in the early thirties which is a link between the early phase and the late phase, that falls between the years from about 1935 till his death in 1941. But the exact point of division in time between the latter two phases cannot be said with certainty.

### Signatures

The various modes of signatures adopted by Rabindranath in his paintings are a useful clue to their chronology. As he was greatly interested in handsome calligraphy, the signatures on his early paintings are highly ornamental, profusely curvilinear, with an art nouveau flourish, especially the vertically aligned signature in Bengali which probably is mostly found in the paintings of 1929. Simultaneously he used a long horizontal signature in very beautiful flowing curves. Both of these in Bengali script often appear together reading as *Sri Rabindra*. He also signed his name in English *Rabindranath*, very close in calligraphy to the second type of Bengali signature. Probably the one in English does not continue after 1930. But the second type of signature in Bengali script is last seen in a painting of 1932 (plate 338). Since then the prefix *Sri* is dropped (to read only *Rabindra*) and the signature is much shorter, less curvilinear and unobtrusive. A painting with such a signature but not bearing a date can safely be assumed to belong to the phase from 1933 to 1939. (All these types of his signatures are compared in plate 261).

### Rabindranath's interest in visual arts

Why did Tagore take to painting during the late years of his life? Was it a mere past-time, an escape from his responsibilities as a national hero? He has been accused by Romain Rolland for not taking his due share in the national struggle.<sup>15</sup> Or did Tagore feel unable to express in words i.e. did his poetic genius get exhausted or did he feel the poetic medium insufficient for giving vent to and concretising his bursting creative energy? Since he continued to be productive side by side simultaneously in poetry too, the latter observation is probably correct.

Here it must also be taken into consideration that (i) in his earlier years he did wish to be a painter (ii) and that the imagery in his poetry is very painterly. He had watched the painting activities of Abanindranath "with an envious mood of self-diffidence being thoroughly convinced that my fate had refused me passport across the strict boundaries of letters".<sup>16</sup> His "intoxication with the game of inventing forms"<sup>17</sup> he considered as turning the full cycle by his mind and a come back to those irresponsible early days "when my eyes were hungry for the world of forms".<sup>18</sup> When he wrote his reminiscences, he called them his memory pictures.

The opening sentence of "My Reminiscences"<sup>19</sup> begins with an allusion to painter's art, "I know not who paints the picture's on memory's canvas; but whoever he may be, what he is painting are pictures; by which I mean that he is not there with his brush simply to make a faithful copy of all that is happening. He takes in and leaves out according to



his taste. He makes many a big thing small and small thing big. He has no compunction in putting into the background that which was to the fore or bringing to the front that which was behind. In short, he is painting pictures and not writing history ”.

“ The variegated colours scattered about are not reflections of outside lights, but belong to the painter himself, and come passion-tinged from his heart ”.

Again

“ Had I been a painter with the brush I should doubtless have tried to keep a permanent record of the visions and creations of that period when my mind was so alertly responsive. But that instrument was not available to me. What I had was only words and rhythms, and even with these I had not yet learnt to draw firm strokes, and the colours went beyond their margins. Still, like young folk with their first paint-box, I spent the livelong day painting away with the many-coloured fancies of my new-born youth. If these pictures are not viewed in the light of that twenty-second year of my life, some features may be discerned even through their crude drawing and blurred colouring ”.

Here are a few random selections from Tagore's poems showing painterly as well as emphatically visual, imagery :

- ( i ) “ The sun is hidden, the stars are lost;  
the red line of the road is merged in the  
mist of the rain; ”
- ( ii ) “ Thou art a glimmer of Gold from the  
dawn on my life's shore,  
a dew drops on the first white flower of autumn.  
Thou art a rainbow from the distant  
sky bending o'er the dust,  
a dream of the crescent moon  
touched with a white cloud ”.
- ( iii ) “ The dark masses of cloud had spread  
before him  
a purple shadow on the distant  
rain-dimmed forest; ”<sup>20</sup>

So then it should not surprise us to see Tagore taking to painting when he could no more resist it. His painting may also imply a criticism, indeed even a rejection, of the Revivalist criteria and its stifling effects. Note the letters he wrote to Abanindranath and Gaganendranath from Japan<sup>21</sup> in which he chided them for their narrow outlook and it appears as if he had decided to show the way. ( Incidentally, his prodding of Gaganendranath did bear fruit in his works of 1920s which very nearly cleared the way for Rabindranath ).

On 8th August, 1916, he wrote from Japan ‘ Gagan, when on earth are you going to step out of the house and travel the world? You should prove your name. But it is idle



to chase you people. I have given the matter much thought..... There is nothing so good for an awakening of consciousness as a good jolt from outside....."

On 8th Bhadra 1916 to Abanindranath

"Aban.....The more I travel in Japan the more I feel that you should have been here, too. Squatting there all the time in your south verandah you will never realize how very essential it is to have contact with the living art of Japan so that our own art may revive and flourish..... If you were here, the thick scales would have dropped off your eyes, the goddess of art in you would have received her true offering. It is only when I paid my visit to Japan that I realised how your art has failed to come true. But what, indeed, can I do? None of you will ever get out....."

By the time he had decided to paint he had made up his mind towards tradition :

"All traditional structures of art must have a sufficient degree of elasticity to allow it to respond to varied impulses of life, delicate or virile; to grow with its growth, to dance with its rhythm."22

It is significant that when he began to paint, he did not start by following traditional mannerisms. There is only one head by him where seemingly he tried to delineate facial features in stylised outline like in Ajanta frescoes. (plate 320) And he gave a call "I strongly urge our artists vehemently to deny their obligation carefully to produce something that can be labelled as Indian art according to some old world mannerism. Let them proudly refuse to be herded into a pen like branded beasts that are treated as cattle and not as cows."23 By this time he had also chalked out the course to be taken. "Let us take heart and make daring experiments, venture out into the open road in the face of all risks, go through experiences in the great world of human mind, defying holy prohibitions preached by prudent little critics....."24

### Rhythm

Apart from his natural propensity for visual imagery, and the artistic convictions and credo, the basic skill he was armed with to begin with was the masterly control of the writer's pen and beautiful calligraphy. There are many examples where he specially wrote down certain poems and statements in beautiful hand-writing and his drawings were only an extension of it. (plate 262) One is at once struck by the calligraphic spontaneity and lyrical flowing grace of the manuscript erasures and the first paintings.

These meanders seem to have grown through the process of repeating line upon line, curve upon curve, extended or deflected in flowing or quick jerks. It is the sense of rhythm that has lead the movement of the pen. As Tagore himself explained : "From my childhood I think I had an inborn sense of rhythm. The only training which I had from my young days, was the training in rhythm, the rhythm in thought, the rhythm in sound. I had come to know that rhythm gives reality to that which is desultory, which is insignificant in itself. And, therefore, when the scratches in my manuscript cried like sinners,



for salvation and assailed my eyes with the ugliness of their irrelevance, I often took more time in rescuing them into a merciful finality of rhythm....."<sup>25</sup>

Rhythm had also guided his poetic activity, because when words 'are bound together by some bond of rhythm they attain their significance as a reality which can be described as creative,' otherwise 'words are barren, dismal and uninspiring by themselves.'<sup>26</sup> Specifically, rhythm was the 'movement generated and regulated by harmonious restriction'. This was for Tagore 'the creative force in the hand of the artist.'<sup>27</sup>

Thus the artist did not start by thinking of the image first and then strive to bring that out by deliberate efforts. There do not exist any preparatory sketches. It is the sheer force of rhythm that has brought out the image. While the images which are grotesque and radically distorted, often distorted to the extent of not belonging to a definite species, the distortion is not deliberate or willful. Whatever anatomical changes or variations of form and proportion that take place, happen rather through the process of the rhythmic motor act.

Many critics have overemphasised the nature of rhythm in the creative act<sup>28</sup> but it must be observed that the sense of rhythm might end in mere pretty patterns. Majority of Tagore's manuscript erasures are more than heraldic decorations organically related and it is clear that he had a tremendous sense of flat design. And he himself talked of "rhythmic interrelationships" and "harmonious wholeness".<sup>29</sup> The forms wedge into the left areas and the left areas wedge into the image itself thus establishing an integral relation between the figure and ground. This happens because unpremeditated rhythmic motor act moves in such a way that lines divide the pictorial surface in shapes of such kind and proportions that they link and bind each other in a coherent whole.<sup>30</sup> For such a quality of organic relation of figure and ground example may be given of the designs on the Cretan Kamares pottery.<sup>31</sup> Tagore maintained this quality when he began painting single images independently of the doodles.

In spite of the figure and ground integral relationship, however, one limitation can be noted. Rabindranath leaves the background empty and untouched. The single images appear appropriately placed in relation to the picture plane but the background is not fully worked out so that background often appears to be neutral.

### Automatism

The lopsided emphasis given to rhythm as the primary guiding principle of Rabindranath's creative activity by critics gives rise to another difficulty. It leaves the weird grotesqueness and highly personal nature of his imagery unexplained. He was not interested in rhythm for the sake of rhythm—tracing beautiful decorative lines—but ultimately he is fascinated by the emerging images and forms. He was very clear about it himself. While he talked of the spell lines cast on him 'which reveal themselves anew in every new shapes and attitudes', he considered himself to be 'intoxicated with the game of inventing forms'.<sup>32</sup> He observed that this visible world is a vast procession of forms. "My artist's



pen wishes to recapture this play of forms—not in any emotional, sentimental or intellectual manner, but purely for the sake of assembling different forms together”.<sup>33</sup>

Instead of starting with a preconceived idea or a natural fact, the process adopted by him was : “ First, there is the hint of a line, then the lines become a form. The more pronounced the form becomes the clearer becomes the picture to my conception. This creation of form is a source of endless wonder.”<sup>34</sup> He contrasted it with poetry where “ the subject-matter of a poem can be traced back to some dim thought in the mind.”<sup>35</sup> In painting it was the element of unpredictability which seemed to fascinate him strongly.

It is significant to note that these explanations about his painting activity were given not during 1930 or after, when his paintings were publicly shown and acclaimed, but in private letters during 1928.

The unpremeditated process, the constant references to the role of mind, memory and feeling, the dissolving of the self in the rhythmic activity, unhampered by reason, the innate energy in the forms themselves to strive into being, and his role as an artist merely to aiding their birth, all tie up with the nature of the process of “ automatism ” as invented by the Surrealists.<sup>36</sup>

This process was explained in an article in *Modern Review* of January 1917 under the heading “ Automatic Drawing ” which Rabindranath might have come across.<sup>37</sup> The article contains extracts from a study made by the two English artists, Austin O. Spare and Frederick Carter, published in the quarterly magazine of the arts, “ Form.” It is interesting that it was noticed by the editor of an Indian journal at this date. According to it the authors had applied the psychoanalytic theories of Freud, Jung and their school as an aid in releasing the cramped and suppressed imaginative fancies of the modern artist. They explained : “ an ‘ automatic ’ scribble of twisting and interlacing lines permits the germ of idea in the subconscious to express, or at least suggest itself to the consciousness. From this means of procreative shapes..... a feeble embryo of idea may be selected and trained by the artist to full growth and power. By these means may the profoundest depths of memory be drawn upon and the springs of instinct tapped.”

“ The hand must be trained to work freely and without control by practice in making simple forms with a continuous involved line without after-thought, i.e. its intention should just escape consciousness. Drawing should be made by allowing the hand to run freely with the least possible deliberation. In time shapes will be found to evolve, suggesting conceptions, forms and ultimately having personal or individual style.”

This method has been specially recommended to those artists ‘ who are hampered in expression, who feel limited by the hard conventions of the day and wish for freedom, who strive for self-expression but have not attained to it.’ ( plate 268 )

The point is not whether Rabindranath had read this article but that he could not have escaped the awareness of this process and its potentiality since the French Dada Group of writers and painters very noisily announced, proclaimed and published their ideas



between 1920 and 1924. In particular while Rabindranath was in Paris during 1921 several Dada activities had taken place which were announced by them through papers which in turn contained long descriptions and severe reproaches of these manifestations.<sup>38</sup> Rabindranath's first doodles appear in 1924 which is also the year of formal formation of the French Dadaists into a Surrealist group followed by the First Surrealist Manifesto of Andre Breton.<sup>39</sup> The automatic process and tapping the unconscious reservoir of childhood memories was at this time practised by Max Ernst, Klee and Miro, especially the last named. Rabindranath inadvertently, then, almost simultaneously, introduces these new manifestations into India. Henri Bidou, the French critic, who wrote an elaborate review of Rabindranath's exhibitions in Paris in 1930, had been among those who had sided the Dadaists in the controversies and polemics their ideas gave rise to.<sup>40</sup>

The phantasmagoric world of Rabindranath's doodles and early paintings are peopled with predominantly animals and birds so grotesque that it is difficult to specify their species. They are a sort of personal zoology in which "some assumed the temperate exaggeration of a probable animal that had unaccountably missed its chance of existence, some a bird that only can soar in our dreams and find its nest in some hospitable lines that we may offer it in our canvas."<sup>41</sup> To an extent they do derive from his childhood memories as is suggested by his recollections of them given below.<sup>42</sup>

"In those days devils and spirits lurked in the recesses of every man's mind, and the air was full of ghost stories.... The very atmosphere was so enmeshed in ghostly terrors that I could not put my feet into the darkness under the table without them getting the creeps." In those days there were no water-pipes and the dark rooms (there was no electricity either) of the ground floor of their house contained rows of huge water jars filled with the whole year's supply of drinking water. Of this Rabindranath remembered — "All those musty, dingy, twilight rooms were the home of furtive 'Things....' Great gaping mouths they had, eyes in their breasts, and ears like winnowing fans; and their feet turned backwards. Small wonder that my heart would pound in my breast and my knees tremble when I went into the inner garden, with the vision of these devilish shapes before me."

### **Inspiration from child art**

The possibilities of inspiration Rabindranath received by the methods of child art in the initial stages of his painting activity cannot perhaps be ruled out. We know that he met the Austrian pioneer of child art, Franz Cizek, at Vienna in 1921 during his fifth tour to Europe.<sup>43</sup> In his famous Juvenile Art Class which Cizek had established in 1897,<sup>44</sup> Rabindranath must have seen children freely using paint and brush and must have felt that lack of skill and training was no handicap for expressing oneself through colours and shapes. To me this meeting with Cizek seems crucial because this also will enable us to put in proper perspective the relation of Rabindranath's paintings with child art. Although Rabindranath has never mentioned Cizek by name in any of his writings on education, (he is said to have written a poem on him) the common elements in both of them to their



approach to the education of children and the role of art in it cannot escape attention. Cizek's programme for his Art Class was based on the view, "To let the children grow, develop and mature."<sup>45</sup>

Tagore's work has often been explained (if sometimes apologetically) by giving the analogy of child art.<sup>46</sup> Though this point will be discussed again later it may be noted here that a careful analysis of Tagore's evolution will reveal that Dr. Mulkraj Anand's theory characterising it as from "scribble to expression", parallel to as happens in child art, does not quite fit in with the actual course of his development as a painter.<sup>47</sup> Tagore brings out images while scribbling, the doodles also delineate at the same time, whereas the child has to grow in age (from 3 years old to 5 years old) to be able to pass from the scribbling stage to image-making stage.<sup>48</sup> That kind of growth does not take place in Tagore. He is already an old man, confident and mature, with fully developed all round sensibilities. Moreover, while child's scribbling is mere recording of motor act and exclusively a game of movement, Rabindranath's scribbling is accompanied by the exercising of the unconscious and is directed towards giving concrete forms to images. In fact image-making seems to be the whole basis of his painting from the beginning to the end. When child begins to draw images they are always schematic and based on a scheme peculiar to children of that age and mental limitations. There are no such schematic elements in Rabindranath's early works at all.

However, one similarity with child art must be pointed out : that just as by the time a child grows into a teenager his picture making begin to be more naturalistic, ( which had in the earlier years been more schematic and linear ), in Tagore's paintings similar differences can be observed between his earlier work, which has a similar flat pattern quality and the later work, which is more painterly, where the images are built in terms of colour masses and conceived in space.

### European Tours

Mention also must be made of the experience that Rabindranath had gained of European art including the trends of his time which he had seen during his numerous European tours. During their stay in Paris, we have an account by Rathindranath, of the visits they paid to the art galleries arranged by Andre Karpeles, a French painter who was a great friend of them. Rathindranath mentions enthusiastically among others the paintings of Van Gogh.<sup>49</sup> In Germany too, he must have seen, beside old masters, the paintings of the expressionists. The similarities with the paintings of Nolde and Klee may be incidental but Rabindranath may have been familiar with their paintings. Probably he visited the Bauhaus school at Weimer during his visit to that city in 1921.<sup>50</sup> The exhibition of modern German art mostly of Bauhaus painters ( including the works of Klee and Kandinsky ) which was held in Calcutta in 1922 was an outcome of this visit and probably at his insistence. So when he embarked on his painterly activity, it has to be believed that, though technically he was a novice, yet he had had a rich visual experience of modern painting, perhaps more profound than any Indian painter could have had at that time.



## Relation with Primitive art

What is the source of the imagery that we find in the doodles and early paintings? How much they derive from the automatic process and tapping of the unconscious has already been indicated. At the same time they have a surprising similarity with American Red Indian and Pre-Columbian art and various other examples of what is now commonly termed as primitive art.

The heads of the creatures in a page of the Purabi manuscript resemble very closely the fish headed idols from Easter Island (plates 270 and 273). Another pair of comparisons of similar kind is the page of Rakta Karbi (1923) and British Columbian carved objects (plates 277 and 279). Also the way the total configuration spreads on the page is very akin to the way the Tilingit tribesmen cover every kind of surface with the peculiar design ensembles predominantly of elongated eye motifs, be it a blanket or wooden box as in plates 274 and 276. A beaky human head is structured with similar relationship of lines which start from a point and thicken as they curl (plate 275). Further parallels of birds with enormous beaks and rounded eyes are the Purabi doodle and a Haida bird head and a Haida-Tilingit bird in painted wood and two early paintings with bird motifs by Rabindranath. (plates 285 with 286; 284, 287 with 288) More parallels of birds with hooked beaks are those which resemble the various wooden objects of the North West Indians. (plate 289 with 292, 290 and 291)

There is a painting suggesting decorated portion of a vessel in the doodling technique which obviously is based on a Peruvian decorated vase. Since such vases are especially found in Peru and the doodle forms resembling patterned surface of a pot could not be accidental (plates 293 and 295). However, the structure of its curved forms resemble that of the Tilingit patterns. There are examples of paintings of single animal motifs which also resemble animal motifs found on Peruvian vases, as if the image is separated from the pot surface and laid on to paper (plate 294). Again, certain bird forms, not only in their contours, but also how they occupy the picture surface, have close affinity with certain birds motifs from Peruvian textiles (plates 296 to 300). When in 1930 he had mastered handling of colour, certain animal paintings continue to bear resemblances in the way they crouch and gnarl, to the wolf-like sea monster from Haida paintings (plates 301, 302 and 303). There is also a painting where two snakes are linked together very much like the way two fishes are related, one of them in head upside down position, used as a motif in a Peruvian textile (plates 304 and 305).

These parallels with primitive art and motifs are so striking that talking in terms of their influence on Rabindranath is unavoidable. Some of these parallels are so close that one has to assume he had been keenly looking at them. This assumption is strengthened by the fact that in an early doodle done on a rough script of the National Song (c. 1905), one can see quite simply a decorative arabesque of branches and leaves of a plant with no hint of weird and uncanny creatures that appear later in the pages of Purabi manuscript



(plate 272). I feel in between the two his acquaintance with primitive art has to be conceded. It is this acquaintance which explains the difference.

Although it may be noted that there is no mention of primitive art by Rabindranath in his writings, but perhaps the best comments he could make on it was to absorb it in his work. He himself has said that "A sign of greatness in great geniuses is their enormous capacity for borrowing, very often without their knowing it."<sup>51</sup>

Tagore's acquaintance with primitive art could be proved circumstantially besides the visual comparisons given above. Once again we should refer to Rabindranath's proposed visit to Peru and the stay with Victoria Ocampo in Argentina in 1924. She mentions the copy book in which Tagore wrote his Purabi poems which also contained the erasures. Her delight in them had encouraged him to go on. But she is silent about how much interest he took in the art of South American cultures. She, however, mentions that Rabindranath had been reading Hudson's (Argentina born English writer) book on Argentina.<sup>52</sup>

It is a well known fact that Tagore used to collect and read all the important literature on a country before embarking on a visit to it. He must have been acquainted with Peruvian art through books giving information on it and containing some illustrations. At least we know a particular book, namely the History of Mankind by Friedrich Ratzel published in 1897, which he definitely owned (plate 269).<sup>53</sup> The book, in two volumes, deals with mostly primitive cultures and has about 1000 engraved illustrations of all kinds of primitive objects and artifacts. Many of the comparisons given above I have selected from it (plates 273, 279, 280, 292, 295, 307).

It is also possible to conjecture that Tagore might have actually seen examples of primitive art. During his first stay in England at the age of 18 in 1879, he frequently visited the British Museum<sup>54</sup> in which there are a number of galleries displaying objects from Africa and the Americas. In 1926 he sat for a portrait to Epstein (the English sculptor) in London.<sup>55</sup> Epstein owned a very large collection of primitive art which Rabindranath might have seen.<sup>56</sup> Also it may be noted that Michael Sadler, of the Sadler Commission on Education, who had met Rabindranath in Santiniketan in 1918, was later on to edit a book on African Art published in 1935 which was presented to Rabindranath by Amiya Chakravarti.<sup>57</sup> In 1926 at Villeneuve in France, as guest of Romain Rolland, he had met among others Sir James Frazer, the famous anthropologist.<sup>58</sup> It is also interesting that George Henri Riviere, who arranged the Paris Exhibition of Tagore paintings in 1930 on the request of Victoria Ocampo, himself was one of the curators of the Museum of Man, the most important museum of primitive art in Paris.<sup>59</sup> Finally, Tagore would not have been unaware of the new enthusiasm in the West for primitive art as an Indian critic refers to it in "Rupam", 1922 : "I have a secret sympathy with the latest Parisian craze over Negro sculpture. I can recall the new "roopollasa" which I experienced when they brought to me their Polynesian image when I first set foot on Java-dwipa. I can therefore sympathise with Picasso, Matisse and Derain in the first thrills with the Tami



masks from New Guinea . . . We are not for ever chained to the beauties of Persian carpets. We can slowly respond to the charms of Peruvian textiles.”<sup>60</sup>

And he continued to be interested in primitive art even during 1930s. Since there is a painting which can be placed in the second phase which seems to be directly related to an African carving (plates 322 and 323). There is a dated drawing in different coloured inks of 1934 in which the linear configuration is based on the tattooing in concentric curves covering the body of a Maori sculpture (plates 278 and 280). The inspiration he probably derived from the primitive masks in the handling of the human face may also be noted. Parallels are given with New Ireland Masks (plates 306, 307) and North American dance mask (plates 308, 309), Peruvian idol in gold (plates 310, 311) and Peruvian clay bottle (plates 312 and 313). There are more mask-like faces during the 1930s (plates 314 and 315) and one demonic face from Shey (1935) is comparable to an African mask (plates 316, 317).

The significance of all that has been mentioned above indicates that Tagore was probably well-acquainted with primitive art. The grotesque quality or the concern with “unbeautiful” which is a constant characteristic throughout Rabindranath’s entire oeuvre may also be as a result of contact with primitive art. His own deep feeling for the “ugly” and “unbeautiful” is revealed in the following: “I love to look on these over grown beasts (referring to elephants), with their vast bodies, their immense strength, their ungainly proportion, their docile harmlessness. Their very size and clumsiness make me feel a kind of tenderness for them—their unweildly bulk has something infantile about it. Moreover, they have large hearts. When they get wild, they are furious, but when they calm down, they are peace itself. The uncouthness which goes with bigness does not repel, it rather attracts.”<sup>61</sup> Indeed Rabindranath could perhaps be regarded as the first Indian painter to have been aware of the qualities of primitive art and to have absorbed some of them in his imagery. This would be another of the *avant garde* elements in his works for India.

The possibility that the resemblances of many of his works with primitive art is only a coincidence will have to be ruled out. At the same time it need not be emphatically claimed that he was deliberately trying to emulate it while its impact on his formative stage cannot be completely denied. The animistic vitality of the creatures of his phantasmagoric world is again akin to much of the primitive art forms transcending them from being mere heraldic signs. May be it is the similar frame of mind at work in either case, a mind which “feels” rather than “sees” the reality, where there is no intellectual barrier between the “felt” reality and its visualization through representation, where the mind, the feeling and the delineating skills fuse into one.

From these arguments it follows that his early work is not all that unconscious as Archer believes.<sup>62</sup> It may also be argued that due to the sufficient familiarity with primitive art this imagery had got absorbed in his subconscious, that is to say, subconscious quality cannot be altogether ruled out. As can be seen that there is in them more than



what meets the eye. The problem of his early work cannot therefore be easily explained or solved.

With this discussion on the origin and sources of Rabindranath's early work and the information yielded from it we can now deal with the question raised by Archer who considers earlier work more interesting because of its *naïvete* and originality.<sup>63</sup> He rejects the later works which he thinks are too self-conscious and deliberate losing the earlier qualities. But it will be seen that inspite of several discernible phases his whole oeuvre possesses certain characteristics which continue throughout. Indeed the most exciting aspect of Tagore's painting is the way he passed through the doodling stage to the stage when he thought as a painter working on painterly problems.

### Analysis and Evolution

When Tagore left the manuscript page and faced a sheet of blank paper it is only single images that he placed on the surface, leaving the background empty. Thus single images on unworked out background are the characteristic of first paintings done immediately after the erasures, i.e. perhaps those done during 1928 and 1929. They also mostly happen to have been done in black ink. Perhaps it is only toward 1930 that he started the use of colour. Rabindranath was not in a hurry. Black ink is used more like a filler extending right upto the sinous contours of the image. Occasionally dabs of brush are used or variations in tone. As he produced more paintings he grew bolder in attempting varied use of colour.

First specific paintings are the symmetrically placed clusters of curling undulating lines with varying thicknesses. The distance between them widens as they extend but narrows down as they converge, giving the effect of the form alternatively expanding and shrinking, generating a beautiful rhythmic movement. The background is plain white of paper or a thin even-toned wash of some colour as in plate 281. Next follow those where a single motif (say the bird in plate 296) is filled with ink leaving the white of the ground untouched. Or the motif may have a heavy outline and the inside filled with pen scribbles. Another painting has a bird filled with ink and the background area treated with random doodling (plates 291, 285).

In his first attempts to bring about integration between figure and ground and also for developing the background he evolved a device which was used frequently. He filled the image with black ink in vigorous brush work upto the contour. The background is allowed to remain uncovered around the contour to let the figure stand out from the ground. (plate 291)

The device is further developed and refined thus : he drew the image in curved lines, then filled the colour within and outside i.e. the enclosed area as well as background portions, taking care of not filling the colour right upto the contour lines. Thus on both sides of the outline paper is left out leaving a white line parallel on each side of the black line. In a surface often of single colour or colours in analogous dark tones what



one first notices is the white arabesques gracefully curling over the surface. There are some excellent paintings bearing this quality (plates 302, 321).

The same device Tagore used when bringing together two or more images. The white arabesques at once relate the two separate forms against the dark ground. This device continued till the end of about 1932. It may also be observed that these whites add an element of volume to the figures and also the background assumes the role of space. This is an incidental effect of leaving the white line but on the whole there does not seem any deliberate attempt to define the images in space till the end of 1930. This point has to be noted because it is during the thirties that white patches of paper are left in such a way that they play the role of "light" indicating a conscious attempt to depict images in space. This is another point to distinguish pre-1930 paintings with those done in the thirties. Yet the device of leaving white arabesques and the primary interest in flowing contour lines continues during the early years of 1930s even when he tried to bring in the qualities of space and volume through subtle colour modulations.

To analyse his growing control over the handling of colour and chromatic relationships which accompanies the transition from linear flat pattern to conceiving the images in masses standing in space (the transition that takes place between c. 1930 and c. 1934) we could take up the four paintings each of a single female figure as in plates 335, 336, 337 and 338. The first two are pre-1930 as indicated by the signature type as well as style. Plate 335 is one of the first paintings in which a female figure is depicted as actually seen. The figure is in flat even tone of black ink with which there is an attempt to relate the background by treating it in quick dabs of ink again of an even tone. Though the result is effective yet it is crude and the dab marks stand more as patterns instead of fusing spatially. The next shows use of tone modulations and introduction of several colours of analogous warm tones. This time the figure is less stiff than the former but in both cases the extremities are badly drawn and the facial features are not depicted. In the third painting (dated 1932) there is an improvement in the drawing of the figure which stands in a meaningful gesture. Face is clearly suggested in profile. The colours are more controlled, applied in several overlapping layers. Even though the background ceases to be a mere back-drop the dominance is on the graceful contour. The fourth painting (dated 1/6/33) is from the late phase where the face assumes importance as if the woman is caught in a certain mood which is suggested by the glance. There is now no concern with the contour and the "light" on the face and the lower part of the painting not only models the head and the body but so far as the face is concerned it emphasises and brings out the expression.

It may be noted that Rabindranath's image of woman is not that of sensual physical beauty but it is something more enigmatic which will be discussed while analysing his portraits. But if they have any sensuality it is because of his lyrical curvilinear lines and strangely such sensuous lines he used even in depicting monstrous beasts as that of 1929 and that from the middle thirties (plates 331 and 332). Note may be taken of these observa-





tions again with regard to Archer's belief<sup>64</sup> that Rabindranath's post-1930 paintings are not of interest because of not sharing the qualities found in paintings between 1928 and 1930.

Talking of figure compositions of the first phase, to begin with the figures simply stand in vertical position. Then their arms are raised and legs outstretched. However, the meaning of their gesticulations is difficult to fathom. May be it is just an effort to show figures in action. This leads to a stage when Rabindranath painted a set of paintings with groups of figures in different actions, bending, looking upward, seated or standing as if a scene from a play is being enacted on stage. (Could there be an allusion to his own plays?) For instance, in the painting no. 341 one notices a king-like figure majestically seated on a throne surrounded by gesticulating figures. In another painting (plate 339) there is again a king-like personage with a prostrating figure in front of him while a group of attendant figures are shown bowing on the left. They may be called paintings with a subject but what subject is depicted is again difficult to guess. Probably, even such "dramatic" paintings have emerged spontaneously.

Most of these compositions are based on a simple scheme of arranging the figures in a single horizontal row almost like a frieze as in plate 346. There is also a composition where birds are placed similarly in a horizontal row (plate 264). Such a scheme was adopted by Egyptians and is also seen in early Rajput paintings. And of course it is characteristic of the paintings of children from the middle group. Tagore need not have derived such a compositional scheme from any particular sources, rather because of his being "unskilled" such naive elements are present in his work. But while children often draw a horizontal line at the bottom of the page and then place figures etc., on it, taking the line as a ground or base, Tagore did not use an actual horizontal line. His figures emerge right from the bottom edge of the picture surface. It is curious that such elaborate figure compositions are hardly found after 1930. This means that he was not to develop in the direction of being a master of structure (In landscape, however, he continued to create more formal and complex compositions). Instead single images predominate in the paintings of 1930s. Thus he was the master of the single image—which strengthens the conclusion that he was primarily an "imagist".

Some of the so-called "dramatic" pictures of 1930 consist of figures geometrically stylized. Indeed, a considerable number of his single figures and group-compositions are based on geometric stylization. Many of them were included in the 1930 exhibition (plates 341, 267). One of them is seen in the photograph for which Tagore and Victoria Ocampo posed in the Paris gallery where his paintings were exhibited (plate 266). As far as I think there are no geometric paintings after 1930, so that all of them can be assigned to the years 1929 and 1930. There are simple ones with single figures on blank background which may be earlier (therefore belonging to 1929). Those with a number of figures arranged in more complex design and paint technique may be assigned to the year 1930. It can therefore be firmly believed that side by side the more lyrical curvilinear styli-



zation he also evolved the angular staccato style where straight lines and angles predominate. These also belong to that phase when Rabindranath seriously worked on complete and formal compositions which attempt was given up in the thirties as far as figures are concerned.

Mention should also be made of the individual heads where there is a wide range in physiognomy and often with grimacing expression, sometimes appearing very caricature like. In the beginning both the physiognomic distortions and grimacing expressions emerge automatically by the movement of the pen or brush, by moving it in jerks or in delicate curves, resulting in a long protruding nose or a wide mouth. But by and by this became a constant obsession and throughout one sees a perpetuating interest in the physiognomic variations and varied facial expressions. It is not that he was not interested in a beautiful face. He could draw such a thing ( though in the beginning technical handicaps are there ) with calm and quietude ( see the line drawing of a female head, plate 330 ). But on the whole it can be said that he was not primarily interested in the beautiful but in the grotesque. This is another point which brings home the fact that he was essentially an imagist concerned with a forceful-telling image. It is through its inherent power and visual impact, its emphatic existence and hypnotic presence, that its meaning and import are experienced. For image is a "psychic occurrence."<sup>65</sup> Its referent is not its analogue in nature for it is not a "replica". What matters in art is not the image of reality but rather the reality of the image. It expresses the relation between things and the relation between things and feelings.<sup>66</sup>

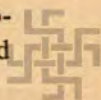
First the female heads may be analysed as in plate 348 to 351. No. 348 is perhaps one of the first female heads of probably late 1929 and also one of the earliest colouristic works bearing the qualities of the paintings of this phase. The oval face is enclosed with sari and hair both of which are surrounded by a band of colour in horizontal striations, the meaning of which is not clear. The colour in this shape may have been applied not with the brush but by dragging an ordinary shaving blade in horizontal strokes. Each of the shapes in the painting is in sharp contours whereas the next head, which was exhibited in 1930, has subtle colour modulations. But the modelling is more conspicuous in the third face which is done in coloured pencil while the sari surrounding the face is painted with horizontal strokes of different coloured crayons. The fourth head of 1940 is in black crayon probably done from a posed person in which the light plays a great deal role in intensifying the expression. They all seem to be pregnant with some inner emotion. The latter appears forlorn, aloof and unapproachable as if troubled with some latent agony. Strangely enough, in these four representations of woman, she seems to be growing in age and personality corresponding to the maturing of Rabindranath's painterly style. The young adolescent with twinkling eyes in the first turns into a naughty vivacious girl in the second. The third shows withdrawn serenity of a mature woman and in the last she is middleaged with a penetrating gaze expressive of the whole life lived and experienced. The change is from frail beauty to life-hardened features.



The sad monumentality of Tagore's pictorial image of Indian women can be linked with those of Amrita Sher-gil and Husain suggesting a current of which he was the initiator—the dark tanned face, partially veiled in deep shadows, cow-eyed meloncholic glances, not gazing straight into the onlooker but from the corners of the eye, apprehensive and withdrawn (plates 352 to 358). For the first time none of these painters borrow pictorial conventions for the representation of the face the inert linear stylization or physiognomic proportions of the past. And equally important is the rejection of the Ravi Varma perpetuated sentimental coyness and the “sex doll” countenance. Their women seem based on visual experience and personal feeling and the artist's striving to objectify them through pictorial equivalents. This tendency, though nearer to European Expressionism, may be termed as Romantic Expressionism, to distinguish it from its western counterpart.<sup>67</sup> It is not entirely relevant to explain them as homage to sex or in terms of Freudian ‘libido’ for Neumann, extending Jungian thesis, has in a monumental book “The Great Mother”, copiously analysed the many faceted interpretations that are possible of man's architypal obsession with woman.<sup>68</sup> In the case of Tagore it can be said that woman for him was an enigma as it is possible to observe of Leonardo vid. his *Mona Lisa*.

The masculine heads have a greater variety ranging from comic to tragic. The earlier ones relate to the types evolved in the doodles and those comparable to the masks (plates 325, 326). First of these are in simpler profiles as in the three heads done in Moscow in 1930 (plate 324). By 1934 he had understood the physiognomy so well he could take greater liberties with it (plate 318). This also reveals a control over facial expression as well as tones though it is in monochrome. In the thirties he also got interested in his own face thus becoming his own first male model. There are three examples no. 360 of 1937 (1343 B.S.), no. 359 of 1936, no. 362 of 1939 (1345 B.S.) The last is in brown sepia with bold brush work. The first is delicately and elaborately modelled in pencil. Second has a very elaborate and variegated colour structure showing the assuredness and competence (almost like Kokoschka's portraits) he had achieved in the last years. They all have a prophet-like serenity as well as inner anguish, as in the wood-cut head of Nolde also titled *Prophet* (plate 363). A self-portrait of Klee is put up to suggest that no visual comparison is possible between Tagore and Klee (plate 361).<sup>69</sup> On the other hand how near Tagore is with Nolde can be seen in the very late pen and ink drawing of heads, no. 368 and no. 369, when placed side by side with a painting of this German Expressionist painter. (It may be noted that primitive masks also had been among Nolde's sources).

From the late years are some more pen and ink heads which are among his very remarkable works showing great mastery of line and tone (plates 364 to 367). (In fact some of his best works are in pen and ink, see also *Bird* (plate 333) of the year 1934). From the late years are also heads no. 373 and 374 in chinese ink. Though done in profile they appear three-dimensional. Similar qualities are also there in heads no. 371 and no. 372 done in colour. All of these can be classed as typically “Expressionist”.





Connected both with the “dramatic” pictures and the caricature heads are the series of pictures consisting of two human faces with grimacing expressions facing each other (plates 375 to 378). Often only the profiles are shown and not the whole face, in slightly inclined position, never standing vertically on the surface. At times entire heads are shown in a symmetrical arrangement, one coming right upto the top of the picture frame the other stopping half way. It may be two men, or man and woman or two females. Occasionally the faces are partially clad which can be read as a sari helping to determine the sex of the figures but often the sex of these cannot be identified with certainty. The figures sometimes accompany a poor stump-like arm, which might be taken as a mark of poor draftsmanship. Yet the recurrence of figures with miserably small and stump-like arms makes this image quite significant which might be full of meaning.

### **Landscapes**

Landscape constitutes a major and constant theme in Rabindranath's oeuvre. And some of the most interesting, refined, expressive and mature paintings were done in this genre. They occur right from about 1929 spreading through all his phases till 1939, but the bulk of them are done in second half of 1930s. In building them up he tried varied techniques and nearly all of his technical repertoire is found in them. In his landscapes there is a constant and steady growth toward maturity and enriched vision. Not only do we observe in them the ripening and culmination of his style but also they indicate his growing sensibility and feeling for the pictorial medium—his understanding of tone, of colour, of texture, of the beauty and rhythm of lines, and how their potentialities could be exploited to express the atmosphere, mood and the mystery of nature.

Rabindranath's landscapes are not studies of nature in the attitude of an observer but they are more as personal reflections. He was never interested in individual elements of nature, there are seldom single trees, for instance. One also looks in vain for nature studies. The many flower pieces that he did are far from being records of botanical specimens. When he painted a landscape it is always total atmosphere that he is seeking for. Even in the earlier cruder and rudimentary landscapes one can see such a striving. Probably he never sat in front of a ‘motif’. They are not based on a particular spot. However, a number of them are certainly inspired by the lush forest-like surroundings of Santiniketan.

The earlier ones are of the type that have emerged out of spontaneous uncoordinated patches and scribblings of ink. Like the other kinds of early paintings he naturally painted his first landscapes in black ink, working with simple medium of monochrome so that he could concentrate on the main idea. In these early landscapes one sees then dual efforts, achieving control on black and white and understanding atmosphere and ideational unity of nature. Light enters in his landscapes only later after specially concentrating his efforts toward it (plates 379 to 382).

First attempts at landscape comprise of patches of black crudely applied with no tone variations. The black patches indicating floating clouds, mountain as well as water. But



the effect is more like a flat pattern of black ink and white areas of paper. They relate as pattern but do not have spatial unity. The spatial unity is achieved in a landscape again with black ink but with pen scribbles which shows excellent understanding of tonal variations and density. The white patches of uncovered paper give the feeling of light and merge with black forming part of the total atmosphere. This may be ascribed to early thirties. In its treatment of 'light' it has a *plein-air* quality like the Impressionists.

In an example of, what perhaps belongs to middle thirties, (was published in 1936) it is not the impression of sun-shine in outdoors but a total mood with many dark shadows akin to the Romantic landscapes (plate 381). The silhouetted forms of column-like trees stand solemnly against a softly glowing sky which is reflected in water. The colour scheme comprises of warm variations of brown. The whole effect may have been inspired by evening but there is a stillness and melancholy about it so that one can see from now onwards that it was a quality of mood that he was seeking, a personal reflection in contact with nature—the mood it evoked in heart (feeling), not meteorological truth through eyes. Thus these late landscapes are akin to Expressionist landscapes in particular to those of Nolde (plates 383, 384).

The common features of the late landscapes are : silhouetted trees against glowing sky arranged on either side of the painting surface, the middle opened up through which the glow of the sky is seen. This serves as compositional focal point and also as means of leading the eye into the pictorial space (see plate 382, dated 1937). Within such self-imposed limitations there are many variations in the placing and the grouping of trees and the shapes of the glowing sky visible through them. There are no local colours and no realistic details but spontaneous brush work of restricted palette. The fact that they are rarely peopled with human figures gives them an added air of peculiarity.



## CONCLUSION

Bazar painters of the early 19th century produced to the extent that was demanded from them which was only very limited. Patron was not interested in it as art but for its exotic value as memento to carry home of an oriental adventure. They did not have the intellectual and aesthetic backing which was provided since revivalism. Consequently this limited the vision of the bazar craftsman. There was no such compulsion for him which would motivate him to take an exploratory attitude or strive for self-expression.

The demand for "native sets" was strong during the first quarter of 19th century which was the age of picturesque and romanticism in Europe. The mood of second half of 19th century changed. Romanticism had degenerated and waned. The Victorian British were no more interested in the exotic. Thus when they looked at the bazar products with the severe and highly restricted attitude of neoclassical art, they expectedly found it absolutely lacking of all aesthetic qualities. This lack of foreign patronage put an end to "native sets" kind of painting impelling the artist to answer the demands of the home market.

With the increase in the demand for images of gods and goddesses by indigenous population, obvious in a country of deeply religious semi-literates, the repertoire of the bazar painter increased, towards the end of the last century and during the early years of the present. What is important to note, however, is that while in iconography they followed the Indian texts, the taste for naturalistic techniques on the part of both the creator and the consumer had taken deep roots. These roots strengthened further as more work was produced of this kind available in shops, displayed in homes and worshipped in temples. It was firmly reinforced by the introduction of western techniques in art schools. The presence of European painters in India and the annual group shows arranged by art societies in various cities added to the prestige of realistic representation.

The widespread acceptance of realistic representation transcended the class barriers. That is to say the hereditary raja, the new rich, the growing middle and working class centred in urban areas, for all, anything where realistic representation was used was art and so also conversely, art meant masterly skill in naturalistic representation. The differences between the "high brow" and the "vulgar" were, of course, also there. Certain sections of the rich bought original paintings of gods or engaged the artist on semi-permanent basis. Others of the same group but secular-minded went in for portraits, landscapes or local scenes. For the "vulgar" was the reproduction with popular themes, gods and saints and by the second quarter of this century, national heroes. But basically there were no qualitative differences between the taste of the elite and that of the masses. Ironically,



the British were concerned with the improving of taste, a concern also shared by the revivalists. The revivalist panacea was the exposure to and emulation of Indian examples of the past. Since they relied upon philosophical and idealist arguments instead of pictorial analysis of aesthetic quality, it is obvious they could not have succeeded in bringing about a qualitative change in the taste. The change was only of kind, in presenting Indian art (as against western art) as the only valid art. The result was pushing to the fore and dissemination of a kind of Indian style through theoretical writings and circulation of poor reproductions. The lack of enlightened taste is still a social weakness with which the present day Indian artists have to reckon with. It is a hindrance for a more vigorous art movement conditioning its quality at the same time.

Spread of the western style representation has accompanied the spread of European learning and westernization of our administration and political organization of the Indian society. The realistic style, therefore, is in terms of art a similar phenomenon as in other aspects of Indian life, including literature. It was responsible for bringing our country, once for all, under the orbit of European manifestations in art.

Realism is not entirely absent from Indian tradition, though the "spiritualists" would have us believe otherwise. The problem of representation is not philosophical but is rightly now analysed in visual psychological terms. Visual representation excites all human beings.<sup>1</sup> It excited the Indians as it did the western mind. The Indian excesses in illusionist techniques resulted in (i) the aversion for them by many artists of the 20th century (from revivalists onward) providing them with a permanent disavowal, and (ii) the tendency for searching new means of pictorial representation.

Revivalist attitude in art echoed the nationalistic manifestations in politics and at social level. Even if these were absolute and extreme ideals, they could not be so in practice. Thus even if "synthesis" was either advocated or resisted "synthesis" in actual fact was taking place as an inevitable consequence. "Synthesis" at political, social and cultural level is also observable at the level of art. "Synthesis" therefore, constitutes a common and continuous phenomenon at every stage. Abanindranath, Gaganendranath and Rabindranath, each had very strong personalities, subscribing to his own attitudes. In spite of this, "synthesis" is also involved in their work. Confrontation with the west and the resultant "synthesis", thus, is a feature both socially and culturally and has to be accepted as an inevitable aspect of twentieth century Indian art.

Revivalism could assert itself not only because it was nationalistic and appealed to the past glory and greatness of Indian traditional art but also because it was highly organized. For the first time India witnessed an art thinking which can be characterised as "total" thinking, that was both backward looking and forward looking at the same time. The problem was clearly understood of arousing the nation from slumber and to remove the decadence. Out of this thinking have come out the subsequent art manifestations so that they are not to be taken as transplantations but a consequence of collective national motivation. It was propagated and supported by learned and distinguished Indians and



by equally distinguished and sympathetic Englishmen. It was vindicated by philosophical arguments either taken from *vedanta*, *shilpashastras* or the "spiritualist" theosophy. It was supported by collections of Indian art and crafts both within and outside the country. It was upheld by money and praise, by extensive writings and circulation of reproductions. It thus seeped through all corners and layers of Indian society. At the cost of quality a style got propagated which resulted in an impasse similar to that caused by the popularity of realism. Toward breaking this deadlock were directed the efforts of Gaganendranath and Rabindranath.

If revivalism as an attitude and ideological firmament is distinguished from the Bengal school style then it will be possible to realize its abiding consequences which have served as a propulsive phalanx in the 20th century. For the first time the Indian painter felt a sense of confidence in his capacity to create art and that he could create art of world significance because in the past we had been able to do so (hence the relevance of glorification of the past achievements). He no more had to trail behind the west nor was he a mere inferior counterpart of the European artist (which was how the followers of realism considered themselves). He could think as an Indian. He could look for sources far and wide. The source could be chosen not because it had the approval of certain quarters, but its validity was determinable by its relevance to his creative intentions. All this was the personal triumph of Abanindranath. Evolving a personal style as the aim of a painter was also shown by Abanindranath through his personal example, the clue to which was free adoption and mastering of various techniques. He also revived many indigenous techniques and processes. Since then working in terms of achieving mastery in different techniques has become a new phenomenon in India. In all these respects Abanindranath paved the way for both Gaganendranath and Rabindranath.

Such personal achievements of Abanindranath should not necessarily be misconstrued as the basis of evaluating his entire work qualitatively as has been done by Mukherji<sup>2</sup> and upheld by Jaya Appasamy,<sup>3</sup> despite the former's perceptive analysis of his style. From my own analysis I have tried to show and as was also observed by Mukherji that Abanindranath "affected a fusion of western and oriental techniques and evolved a new style." He called this technique as that of the 'realistic type'—'a realism absolutely his own.' Even after recognizing the sources from which Abanindranath derived the ingredients of his style Mukherji hastens to add that 'it did not belong to any specific tradition.' Stella Kramrisch<sup>4</sup> conceded his technique as "combination" which was personal and Indian at the same time. But I think Cousins<sup>5</sup> was much nearer the truth who saw in Abanindranath "a fusion of the detailed observation of realism with the suggestiveness of impressionism." That is why I have chosen to term it as "Indian realism".

Archer's<sup>6</sup> judgement represents another extreme, which is based more on taste rather than analysis. He uses familiar adjectives levelled against Bengal School as a whole, characterising its weakness thus "hesitant, indecisive line, misty vagueness of form, sombre murkiness of colour, likings for girlish stances, dainty wanness, anaemic sentimentality."





Such adjectives could also be used for the degenerated form of Romanticism and weaker works that came out of art nouveau, for every movement has had its detractors. Adjectives like 'dainty' and 'misty' are not pejorative in themselves but when derogatoriness is implied in them that only betrays one's taste. Such adjectives may apply to Bengal School as a type, distinguishable from Abanindranath, who cannot be blamed for the weaknesses of his lesser talented self-professed followers. Even then much more commendable are the works of Nandalal Bose, Khitindranath Majumdar and A. R. Chagutai. And certainly Ram Kinker and Binode Bihari Mukherji, who also developed amidst the same firmament, are far from being 'dainty' nor do they possess 'anaemic sentimentality'. The point is that it is time the distinctions are made between Revivalism as the ideological catalyst, the personal work of Abanindranath and the work of the numerous painters who are classed in the Bengal School. Archer's judgements are therefore, neither well considered nor rational.

Although he never gave up realism, Abanindranath was too much concerned with Indian or indigenous style. Even if he had mastered the techniques that he synthesised his preoccupation with style, rather than expression actually limited his experimentation. That is why we do not get in his development a progression leading to a stage when it could be said that he had reached a point where the style is one with his personality. He had imposed such restrictions on himself: "Forms impelled by *bhava*—feelings and passions—would naturally lose all restraint and assume attitudes devoid of beauty and orderliness. At such times *lavanya*—grace or the artistic sense—steps forward and with the magic touch of tenderness removes all enormity and excess of contortions which would mar the dignity and beauty of feelings and forms."<sup>7</sup> It seems that before starting a painting he had decided the mode in which to execute it, since it is possible to find prototypes even in his last phase. His another preoccupation was with illustration for he never lost sight of the "subject" which invariably became his starting point. As a result no tension was experienced between the personal intention and the pictorial fact. There is no feeling that a problem is being worked out and solved. In that sense his work is not "creative" in the modern sense. Although his working period lasted for nearly half a century, his output, though large, is not so rich and varied compared to Gaganendranath's 25 years and Rabindranath's 15 years.

Gaganendranath took the most blatant step of absorbing foreign influences, in particular modern western. He came very close to his sources, like Impressionism as well as Japanese, yet always found a way out of them through them. So also characterised his honeymoon with cubism. He mastered it and overcame it. By persistence he also succeeded in overcoming his amateurishness. His experimentation was purposive and when analysed in totality appears heading toward a concrete fruition. The technique fused with the personality. So that choice of medium and pictorial elements became one with what he intended to express. The dream phantasies he expressed were not a deliberate choice. They sprang from the unconscious and kept on haunting him. The constituents involved for their externalization—the expressive use of light, the fathomless space, the looming





shadows—are essentially pictorial elements, juxtaposed and controlled, to evoke the air of mystery, the aura of fear, as the contingents of his phantasms.

He is the first Indian to exploit light in its relation to space, so extensively, so masterly and so expressively, never possible before. Though light is essentially western, his use is too personal to make it matter much that it was not indigenous. This does not minimize the Indian element in his works even if one were looking for so. For the Indian-ness lies in his genuine individuality. His proneness to influences shows his openness of mind and extreme sensitivity. Instead of being a sign of weakness it shows his tremendous capacity for absorption, certainly a worthy quality of a master.

Although surprisingly a few of his contemporaries<sup>8</sup> could recognize his genius, the radicality of his experiments and their success, fully aware of their western origin, recent critics<sup>9</sup> have utterly failed to realise his significance for his time (even though armed with the advantage of a perspective of 40 years), his profundity and the continued links relating his various preoccupations, which all came to a final fruition in his late works. He was a lone rebel in a sea of conservatism. He met the challenge of modernity at its own ground.

The lack of formal training and painterly skills eventually had a great advantage for Rabindranath. There was no problem for him of conscious ridding himself of conventional mannerisms or realistic chiaroscuro. There was also no question of picking up styles, of weighing one style with other. Rather, he discovered the techniques and media through the course of his years of painterly activity and the practice gave him control over them so that the initial handicap of technical skill became actually an advantage. In this he was guided by his instinct and the force of his creative intuition which was truly volcanic.<sup>10</sup> Watching his growth is fascinating indeed. It is only out of inhibitions that some critics continue to call him a child-artist. What Croce says about intuition—that every true intuition is also expression—at least appears true with regard to Rabindranath.<sup>11</sup>

The Freudian interpretation of his paintings by Archer<sup>12</sup> is too narrow and deliberate, agreeing that there is a 'hard core' of his work which matters, the point is how you choose this hard core. Freud<sup>13</sup> himself has explained that libido is not basically sexual and that more than one interpretations are possible of it. Archer's conclusions have the weakness of such conclusions where Freudian interpretations have been resorted to, where whatever the imagery or symbolism, it is all read as phallic or having allusions to sexual union. By reviewing such analysis of the work of certain painters<sup>14</sup> we find that Freudian analysis is legitimately possible in those artists who in their personal lives reveal certain mal-adjustments or mental disintegration as for example in Van Gogh (there is no such evidence in the life of Rabindranath) or again where an artist shows deep attachment to childhood memories and nostalgic obsessions as in Chagall (this too is not dominant in Rabindranath).

I think Rabindranath is his own best critic. It was the unpredictability in art that interested him. It was the certain imagery burdening his mind which he wanted to bring out, the significance of which was its own clarity and inevitability.<sup>15</sup> Without denying



the fact they may be having psychological significances<sup>16</sup> he insisted not to read meanings in them, therefore refusing to give them titles.<sup>17</sup> However, he does come closer to Expressionism in his pessimism, in his introvertedness and in his emphasising the feeling-import of the image rather than its physical facts.

In their own way they effectively changed the Indian scene to the extent that it could not be the same again. They brought an era of freedom, of experimentation, a sense of confidence, a sense of independence, from which subsequent generations have certainly been benefited. Had the work of Gaganendranath and Rabindranath been more known in their time it would have further accelerated the art situation. Even now the more their work becomes familiar and their contemporary significance realized the more challenging will appear the task of the present generation. Their achievement comes as a revelation and establishes the fact not only that modern art arrived with them but that it has already taken deep roots—a realization not dawned on many of our critics.

In European terms in Abanindranath we find realism, Impressionism and post-Impressionism (art nouveau) at the same time. Both he and Gaganendranath absorbed much from Japanese art, something that happened in Europe also during the last quarter of 19th century. Gaganendranath further represents in his work cubism, abstraction (based on structure and colour archestration) and the romantic phantasy of surrealism. Rabindranath echoes the Expressionist acceptance of the "naive" and the instinct along with the unpremeditative approach practised by the surrealists.





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*Abbreviations used :*

- A. N. T. for Abanindranath Tagore
- G. T. for Gaganendranath Tagore
- R. N. T. for Rabindranath Tagore
- B. B. M. for Binode Bihari Mukherji
- V. B. Q. for Vishva Bharati Quarterly
- L. K. C. for Lalit Kala Contemporary
- I. S. O. A. for Indian Society of Oriental Art
- J. I. S. O. A. for Journal of Indian Society of Oriental Art
- M. R. for Modern Review

1

## INTRODUCTION

- 1 ( i ) Sachin Ganguly, *Cultural Confusion in Modern India*.  
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- 2 One only has to refer to syllabii of courses in the subjects of Sociology, Economics and Political Science.
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- 4 e.g. writings of R.N.T. himself about his own paintings.
- 5 Lionello Venturi, *History of Art Criticism*, New York, 1964.
- 6 Comparative method was first evolved by H. Wölfflin and formulated in his "Principles of Art History", 1932 ( German version published in 1915 ). This method has also emphasised how photographs of works of art could be made use of in establishing parallels and influences indubitably by visual comparisons. As part of an exercise in the effective use of this method, I have relied heavily on visual documentation.
- 7 Lionello Venturi—op. cit.
- 8 S. K. Nandi, *Aesthetics of A.N.T.*, Proceedings of the Seminar on Indian Aesthetics and Art Activity, Simla, 1968.
- 9 It has been particularly attempted in the case of Gaganendranath only.
- 10 e.g. reproductions of A.N.T.'s paintings and press-reviews of the annual exhibitions of I.S.O.A. between 1920 and 1930. See note 4 of Chapter V and Appendix I.





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## 19TH CENTURY INDIA, BACKGROUND AND MILIEU

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- 2 *The Imperial Gazetteer of India*, Vol. IX, Oxford, 1908.
- 3 H. Goetz, *The Great Crisis from Traditional to Modern Art*, *Lalit Kala Contemporary*, No. 1, June, 1962.
- 4 H. C. E. Zacharias, *Renascent India*, London, 1933.
- 5 N. V. Sovani, *British Impact on India*.
- 6 S. P. Sen, *Effects on India of British Law and Administration in the 19th century*. ( Nos. 5 and 6 contained in *Studies in the Cultural History of India*, sponsored by the UNESCO and edited by Metraux and Crouzet, Agra. )
- 7 K. P. Karunakaran ( Editor ), *Modern Indian Political Tradition*, New Delhi, 1962.
- 8 S. Natarajan, *A Century of Political Reform in India*, Bombay, 1959.
- 9 J. H. Broomfield, *Elite Conflict in a Plural Society*, California, 1968.
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### Section II

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- 2 ( i ) Jaya Appasamy. 'The Folk Inspiration in Modern Indian Painting', Lalit Kala Contemporary, No. 5, Sept. 1969.
- ( ii ) K. G. Subramanyam. Folk Art and Modern Artist in India, L.K.C. No.10, Sept. 1969.
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- 6 Ibid.
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- 12 Mildred and W. G. Archer, Op. Cit.
- 13 Noted by Archer in Op. Cit.
- 14 ( i ) C. Sivaramamurti, Directory of Museums in India, New Delhi, 1959.
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- 17 ( i ) V. Nagam Aiya, The Travancore State Manual, III ( Trivendrum, 1906 ).
- ( ii ) Krishna Chaitanya, Ravi Varma, New Delhi, 1960.
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- 25 ( i ) Some Notes on Indian Artistic Anatomy, Modern Review, March, 1914.





- (ii) Six limbs of Indian Painting, M. R. Oct., 1915. Reprinted in V. B. Quarterly, May-October, 1942.
- (iii) Bhageshwari Lectures, Bhageshwari Silpa Prabandavali, 1921-29, Calcutta University, 1941.
- 26 E. B. Havell, op. cit. in it Havell mentioned that he made Abanindranath's acquaintance while looking for Indian Pictures for the Art Gallery of the Art School.
- 27 Rathindranath, On the Edges of Time, Calcutta, 1958.
- 28 Phalguni was staged at the Jorasanko Courtyard to raise funds for providing relief to sufferers of Bankura.  
Valmiki Pratibha was performed at Jorasanko house in 1881 on the occasion of a garden party given for Lady Landsdowne, See J.O.I.S.A., 1962.
- 29 Krishna Kripalani—op. cit.
- 30 Rathindranath—op. cit.
- 31 Ibid.
- 32 A.N.T. op. cit. Free translation by the present author.
- 33 Rathindranath—op. cit.
- 34 Mukul Dey—op. cit.
- 35 Krishna Kripalani—op. cit.
- 36 O. C. Gangoly—Obituary of G.N.T., Amrit Bazar Patrika, Calcutta, 1938.
- 37 Marquess of Zetland (former Lord Ronaldsay) Memories of G.N.T., V. B. Q. IV/I, Summer, 1938.
- 38 Information given in a conversation by B. B. M.
- 39 Information given in a conversation by Dwarik Chatterjee, son of Gaganendranath's daughter.
- 40 Deval's name is given by Rathindranath in op. cit. Modern Review of June, 1917, has a biographical note on him by C. F. Andrews under the title 'A Young Indian Sculptor', which include five photos of his sculptures, two portraits of Tagore in bronze, among them. According to it, Narayan Kashinath Deval's father was a Maharashtrian Brahmin and mother Burmese. Having spent his childhood in Burma he went to Santiniketan at the age of 10. In 1912, after being there for 8 years Rabindranath sent him to London to study philosophy and literature. Since he showed inclination for sculpture, Rabindranath encouraged him to give whole time to it. He studied under Richard Garbe at the Central School of Art, Stone Carving, Modelling and Bronze casting. In 1915, he returned and worked at Bichitra Club. He left after one year preferring Santiniketan to the city life of Calcutta. Nothing is heard of him after this.
- 41 See R.N.T's letter to G.T. in Ashok Mitra, L.K.C. No. 2, 1964.
- 42 Information on Bichitra Club is given by Rathindranath, op. cit.
- 43 Ibid.
- 44 Jogesh Chandra Bagal, History of the Govt. College of Art and Craft, Centenary—Govt. College of Art and Craft, Calcutta, 1966.





- 45 Ibid.
- 46 Thus referred to by E. B. Havell, *Art Administration in India*, Journal of Royal Society of Arts, Vol. LVIII, London, 1909.
- 47 Gladstone Solomon, *The Bombay Revival of Indian Art*, Bombay, 1923(?)
- 48 Bombay Art Society—Diamond Jubilee Souvenir, 1948 and Seventy-five years of B.A.S.
- 49 Marquess of Zetland, V.B.Q. May-Oct., 1942.
- 50 Jogesh Chandra Bagal, op. cit.
- 51 Ibid.
- 52 A.N.T. op. cit.
- 53 O. C. Ganguly, *Indian Society of Oriental Art, Its Early Days*. J.I.S.O.A. Nov., 1961.
- 54 Ibid.
- 55 J. C. Bagal, op. cit.
- 56 Ibid.
- 57 A.N.T. op. cit.
- 58 O. C. Ganguly, op. cit.
- 59 Ibid.
- 60 I.S.O.A. *A Short History. Rules and Regulations Calcutta*. Date of printing not given but at this time their offices were at Samavaya Mansions where it functioned during 1920s. Among the office-bearers are mentioned Marquess of Zetland, President, G.N.T., one of the Vice-Presidents and A.N.T. one of the Jt. Hon. Secretaries.
- 61 O. C. Ganguly, op. cit.
- 62 A.N.T. op. cit.
- 63 O. C. Ganguly, op. cit.
- 64 A.N.T., op. cit.
- 65 Ibid.
- 66 O. C. Ganguly, op. cit.
- 67 I.S.O.A., *A Short History, Rules and Regulations*.
- 68 See Catalogue of the Exhibition of Paintings of the New Calcutta School, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, 1914.
- 69 James Cousins, *I.S.O.A., Its Early Days*, J.I.S.O.A., Nov. 1961.
- 70 G. Venkatachalam, *Some Reminiscences about the Bengal School*. L.K.C. No. I, June, 1962.
- 71 James H. Cousins, *The Renaissance in India*, Madras, 1918.
- 72 M. R. Dec. 1908.
- 73 Ramanand Chatterjee—A.N.T., V.B.Q. May-Oct. 1942, Sister Nivedita, on Shah Jahan Dreaming of the Taj, M. R., Jan. 1910; The Passing of Shah Jahan, M. R., 1907; Captive Sita, M. R. March, 1908.
- 74 O. C. Ganguly op. cit.
- 75 Ibid.
- 76 Information given by Dwarik Chatterjee.



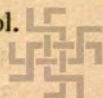


- 77 A.N.T. op. cit.
- 78 Rathindranath Tagore, op. cit.
- 79 A.N.T. op. cit.
- 80 I.S.O.A., A Short History, op. cit.
- 81 O. C. Ganguly op. cit.
- 82 Ray Govind Chandra, op. cit.
- 83 Rathindranath Tagore, op. cit.
- 84 Ibid.
- 85 For details of this exhibition, see Appendix.
- 86 Rathindranath Tagore, op. cit.
- 87 A.N.T. op. cit. and J.I.S.O.A. Nov., 1961.
- 88 B.B.M. in V.B.Q., May-October, 1942.
- 89 K. Okakura, The Ideals of the East, London, 1903.
- 90 A.N.T., op. cit. and English translation in J.I.S.O.A., Nov., 1961.
- 91 Surendranath Tagore, Kakuzo Okakura, V.B.Q., Autumn, 1936.
- 92 Ibid.
- 93 Okakura, The Ideals of the East.
- 94 Ibid.
- 95 Ibid.
- 96 Ibid.
- 97 Nivedita in her introduction to Okakura, op. cit.
- 98 Okakura,
  - (a) Notes on Contemporary Japanese Art
  - (b) The Autumn Exhibition of The Nippon—Bijitsu-in—The Japanese Fine Arts Academy, The Studio, London, February, 1906.
- 99 K. Okakura, The Ideals of the East.
- 100 Ibid.
- 101 Ibid.
- 102 Mentioned by Okakura in f.n. 98.
- 103 A.N.T. op. cit. and J.I.S.O.A., Nov., 1961.
- 104 Ibid.

4

## AESTHETIC IDEAS AND CONTROVERSIES

- 1 See Havell, Revival of Indian Handicrafts, (A lecture delivered before the Indian Industrial Association—July 1901), in Essays on Indian Art, Industry and Education, Madras.
- 2 Havell, Art Administration in India, Journal of Royal Society of Arts, London, Vol. LVIII, 1909.
- 3 See f.n. 1.





- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Sir George Birdwood, *Industrial Arts of India—Handbook of the Indian section of the South Kensington Museum*, London, 1880.
- 6 Birdwood—Comments on Havell's paper 'Art Administration in India,' J.R.S.A. 1909.
- 7 See Nikolaus Pevsner, *Pioneers of Modern Design*, London, 1960.
- 8 See f.n. 5 and 6.
- 9 Havell, *Indian Sculpture and Painting*, London, 1908, and *The Ideals of Indian Art*, London, 1911.
- 10 Havell, *The Ideals of Indian Art*.
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 Quoted by John Rewald, *Post-Impressionism, from Van Gogh to Gauguin*. New York, 1960(?)
- 16 Coomaraswamy, *The Modern School of Indian Painting in Art and Swadeshi (A Collection of Essays, Madras)*.
- 17 Coomaraswamy, *The Function of Schools of Art in India (A reply to Cecil Burns) in Art and Swadeshi*.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 Coomaraswamy, *The Aims of Indian Art*, Broad Campden, 1908.
- 22 Ibid.
- 23 Ibid.
- 24 Ibid.
- 25 Ibid.
- 26 Ibid.
- 27 See A. N. Tagore, "Some Notes on Indian Artistic Anatomy", *Journal of Indian Society of Oriental Art*, 1961. (First printed in *Modern Review*, 1915).
- 28 Havell and Coomaraswamy too had criticized Indian educational system of the time for its neglect of the study of Indian Art, yet it seems Havell was equally concerned with the problem of providing the hundreds of traditional craftsmen with means of livelihood, thereby economic progress had a primary place in Havell's scheme of things contrary to Aurobindo.
- 29 Aurobindo Ghosh, *National Value of Art (Reprint of essays published in Karma-yogin—Nos. 20-25, Nov.-Dec., 1909)* Chandranagar, 1922, p. 49-50.
- 30 Ibid., p. 51.
- 31 James Cousins, *The Art of Asit Kumar Halder*, Rupam No. 9, Jan., 1922.
- 32 Ibid.





- 33 Ibid.
- 34 Special interview with James Cousins, published in the "Chronicle", Madras, reprinted in Rupam No. 11, July, 1922.
- 35 Ibid.
- 36 Ibid.
- 37 Ibid.
- 38 Ibid.
- 39 Coomaraswamy, Young India, in Dance of Siva (Collected Essays).
- 40 Later in his life, Coomaraswamy seems to have shifted his position with regard to the role of tradition in the artistic revival of India compared to the position taken by him in his early writings.
- 41 Carritt, Philosophies of Beauty.
- 42 Havell, Indian Sculpture and Painting.
- 43 Agastya, The Aesthetics of Young India (a rejoinder) Rupam No. 9, Jan., 1922.
- 44 Ibid.
- 45 Ibid.
- 46 Ibid.
- 47 Binay Kumar Sarkar, The Aesthetics of Young India, Rupam No. 9, Jan., 1922.
- 48 Ibid.
- 49 Ibid.
- 50 See Wofflin, Principles of Art History, 1915; Roger Fry, Vision and Design, 1922 and Clive Bell, Art, 1914.
- 51 Sarkar, The Aesthetics of Young India.
- 52 Ibid.
- 53 Ibid.
- 54 Ibid.
- 55 Ibid.
- 56 Ibid.
- 57 Ibid.
- 58 Binoy Kumar Sarkar, Tendencies of Modern Indian Art, Rupam, No. 26, 1926.
- 59 R. N. Tagore, Art and Tradition in On Art and Aesthetics, New Delhi, 1961.
- 60 Tagore, Art and Tradition, 1926.
- 61 Ibid.
- 62 See Henri Bergson, Laughter, 1913.
- 63 Tagore, What is Art? 1916.
- 64 Ibid.
- 65 Ibid.
- 66 Ibid.
- 67 R. N. Tagore, Letter, 29th Nov., 1928, in On Art and Aesthetics, p. 91.
- 68 R. N. Tagore, Letter to Jamini Roy, 1941, in On Art and Aesthetics.
- 69 Havell, Indian Sculpture and Painting.





- 70 Tagore, My Pictures II, 2nd July, 1930.
- 71 See Rudolph Arnheim, Art and Visual Perception, 1956.
- 72 Tagore, Letter, 20th Nov. 1928.
- 73 Tagore, Letter, 7th Nov. 1928.
- 74 Tagore, Letter, 1941.
- 75 Anonymous, Painting in Bengal, The Art of Gaganendranath Tagore, in Welfare (a magazine) September 24, 1928.

(The first three decades of the 20th century have been very rich in aesthetic ideas while later years have been rather barren. During the first and the second decade was propounded and elaborated the philosophy of revivalism. The third decade represents a reaction. In the first group are the thinkers like Havell, Coomaraswamy, Aurobindo Ghosh, James Cousins and Agastya, etc. In the second group fall those who pointed out the limitations of the above thinkers and introduced new concepts. One of these critics was Binay Kumar Sarkar, probably the first to come out against narrow nationalism and high spiritualism and the other was Rabindranath Tagore. This chapter is an attempt to enumerate the ideas of both the groups and their points of dispute. In this limited space ideas of each thinker can be dealt with only sketchily and also this should be regarded as a tentative presentation of this complex theme).

5

## ABANINDRANATH

- 1 (a) Havell—"Some Notes on Indian Pictorial Art," Studio 1902. "The New Indian School of Paintings." Studio, 1908.
- (b) The following 5 paintings of Abanindranath were reproduced in the 1902 article of Havell :
  - 1—Buddha and Sujata.
  - 2—In the Zennana.
  - 3—The Traveller and the Lotus.
  - 4—In the Dark Night (Abhisarika).
  - 5—Princess Lotus.
- 2 Havell—Studio, 1902, op. cit.
- 3 (i) Coomaraswamy "The Modern School of Indian Painting," Journal of Indian Art, 1911, Also reproduced in his Art and Swadeshi.
- (ii) O. C. Ganguly, The New Indian School of Painting, Journal of Indian Art, 1916.
- (iii) Juel Madsen, Abanindranath Tagore, Rupam, July/Dec. 1924.
- (iv) M. Hollebecque, The Artistic Awakening of India, translation of an article in French, Modern Review, October, 1918.
- 4 (a) Reproductions of Abanindranath's paintings in Modern Review :
  - 1 Building the Taj, 1909.





- 2 Shah Jahan Dreaming of the Taj, Jan. 1910.
- 3 Ganesh Janani, Feb. 1911.
- 4 Ramachandra and the Golden Deer, June, 1911.
- 5 Kacha and Devayani, Dec. 1911.
- 6 Birth of Sacred Plant Tulsi, August, 1913.
- 7 In the Dark Night, Jan. 1914.
- 8 End of the Journey, March, 1914.
- 9 Kajari Dance, Oct. 1918.

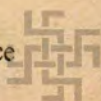
(b) Reproductions of A.N.T's paintings in Prabasi ( Bengali ) :

- 1 Pushpa Radha, Vaisakh, 1320 B.S. = 1913 A.D.
- 2 Malini, Vaisakh, 1326 = 1919.
- 3 Portrait of Rabindranath, Gandhi and Andrews, Vaisakh, 1326 = 1919.
- 4 Om Manipadma Om, Vaisakh, 1326 = 1919.
- 5 Chinese Buddhist Bikshu, Magh, 1326 = 1919.
- 6 Holi, Vaisakh, 1326 = 1919.
- 7 Kal Baisakhi ( Peacock ), Vaisakh 1328 = 1921.
- 8 Shishur Swarga, Magh, 1328 = 1921.
- 9 Hiramona Tota, Vaisakh, 1331 = 1924.
- 5 Abanindranath—( i ) Jorasankor Dhare, Vishva Bharati, 1944, ( ii ) Gharoa, Vishva Bharati, 1942.
- 6 Catalogue of the Exhibition of Paintings of the New Calcutta School, Victoria and Albert Museum, Publication No. 97T, London, 1914.
- 7 Edited by K. Kripalani. V.B.Q. 1942.
- 8 Mukul Dey, Abanindranath Tagore, V.B.Q. 1942.
- 9 Abanindranath, His Early Works, edited by R. Chakravarti, Calcutta, 1951.
- 10 J. P. Ganguly, Early Reminiscences. V.B.Q. 1942.
- 11 Rabindranath Tagore, Chitrangada, 1892.
- 12 Four Arts Annual, 1935.
- 13 Jorasankor Dhare.
- 14 Mukul Dey, op. cit.
- 15 J. C. Bagal, op. cit.
- 16 J. P. Ganguly—op. cit.
- 17 Ibid.
- 18 Jorasankor Dhare.
- 19 B. B. Mukherji—V.B.Q. 1942.
- 20 Jorasankor Dhare.
- 21 William Morris—Collected works of William Morris, London, 1910/15. N. Pevsner, Pioneers of Modern Design.
- 22 Jorasankor Dhare.
- 23 Robin Ironside—Pre-Raphaelite Painters, London, 1948.





- 24 Jorasankor Dhare.
- 25 Abanindranath Tagore, in an address to students in 1909, quoted by B. B. Mukherji, V.B.Q. 1942.
- 26 J. P. Ganguly, op. cit.
- 27 Reproduced in O. C. Ganguly, Rajput painting. It was earlier reproduced in M. R. 1910.
- 28 Havell—op. cit. (1902).
- 29 Coomaraswamy, op. cit. Roger Fry's comments quoted in Ibid.
- 30 Havell—op. cit. (1902).
- 31 Sir George Watt, Official Catalogue of Indian Art Exhibition, 1903.
- 32 Ibid.
- 33 Quoted by Kanti Ghosh, The Making of an Artist, V.B.Q., 1942.
- 34 According to Abanindranath he also wished to bring into this painting his feelings after the death of his daughter in the 1899(?) plague.
- 35 Archer, op. cit.
- 36 Jadunath Sarkar wrote many articles on Mughal Rulers on M. R. between 1910 and 1915.
- 37 Lawrence Binyon—Painting of the Far East.
- 38 The fact regarding its dating is missed by many that it was published in the form of an album in 1910 by Studio Press. London, e.g. Jaya Appasamy mentions it was done between 1910-12. In Modern Review, Sept. 1909, it has been noted that some of *Omar Khayyam* paintings were lent for the Art Exhibition held at Simla, during that year.
- 39 Abanindranath—Likeness, Journal of Indian Society of Oriental Art, Nov., 1961.
- 40 A painting by Andre Karpeles is in the Academy of Fine Arts, Calcutta. Her article, 'The Calcutta School of Painting,' appeared in Rupam, Jan./June, 1923. For information on post-impressionist painting and ideas see John Rewald, 'Post-Impressionism—From Van Gogh to Gauguin, New York. The similarities and parallels between the works of Abanindranath and Art Nouveau painters did not escape the German critics while reviewing the exhibition of Calcutta Painters held in Berlin in 1923. These reviews were reprinted in Rupam, July/Dec., 1923.
- 41 Nivedita, Modern Review, December, 1909.
- 42 Abanindranath Tagore, Sadanga : Six Limbs of Painting.
- 43 B. B. M. op. cit.
- 44 Abanindranath Tagore, Sadanga : Six Limbs of Painting.
- 45 John Rewald, History of Impressionism.
- 46 Mukul Dey, op. cit.
- 47 Englishman, December 22, 1921.
- 48 Jadunath Sarkar, Zebunissa's Love Affairs, Modern Review, Jan. 1916.
- 49 The painting is in Kalabhavan, Santiniketan. Although I visited Santiniketan twice it was not possible to photograph it.





- 50 Advance, December 24, 1930.
- 51 Mohanlal Ganguly, *An Artist's Hobby*, V.B.Q. 1942.
- 52 For details of the themes see D.C. Sen, *History of Bengali Literature*, and B. B. M., *Chronology*, V.B.Q. 1942.
- 53 B. B. M. op. cit.
- 54 B. B. M. op. cit.
- 55 However, the dating of such works of Nandalal Bose and B. B. Mukherji, is not verifiable.

6

## GAGANENDRANATH

- 1 ( i ) Vachaspati Gairola, *Bhartiya Chitrakala*,
- ( ii ) Bishu Dey, *Review of Archer's India and Modern Art*, V.B.Q. Vol. 25, No. 1, Summer 1959.
- 2 See Introduction to the Catalogue of the Exhibition of Paintings of the New Culcutta School, Victoria and Albert Museum, Publication No. 97T, London, 1914. The exhibition was organised originally in Paris by the French painter, Andre Karpeles, who was a close friend of the Tagores.
- 3 See e.g. Abani Banerji, *Gaganendranath Tagore's New Indian Art*, *Modern Review*, March, 1924, Calcutta.
- 4 See his *Jorasankor Dhare*, *Santiniketan*, 1944.
- 5 See Kanyalal Vakil in the *Bombay Chronical*, 30th June, 1926.
- 6 Rathindranath Tagore, *On the Edges of Time*, Calcutta, 1958, Pp. 88-94.
- 7 Dinesh Chandra Sen, *Gaganendranath Tagore As I Knew Him*, *Journal of Indian Society of Oriental Art*, June/Dec. 1938.
- 8 Rathindranath, op. cit.
- 9 *Amrit Bazar Patrika*, Calcutta, 1938.
- 10 See Pratima Devi, *Souvenir of the Gaganendranath Tagore Centenary*, *Rabindra Bharati Society*, Calcutta, Sept. 1967.
- 11 *The Art of Gaganendranath Tagore*, *Welfare*, 24th Sept. 1928. Abani Bannerji, op. cit., and K. Vakil, op. cit.
- 12 These are in Calcutta in the possession of Dwarik Chatterji, son of Gaganendranath's daughter.
- 13 Information verbally given by Binode Bihari Mukherji.
- 14 Reproduced in '*Jeevansmriti*', Jyotirindranath is represented as he appeared in his youth.
- 15 Mukul Dey, V.B.Q., May/Oct. 1942.
- 16 *Portrait Drawings by Jyotirindranath Tagore*, *Studio*, London, 1910.
- 17 D. C. Sen, op. cit.
- 18 Verbally told to the present author by Dwarik Chatterji.





- 19 D. C. Sen, op. cit.
- 20 Full title of the book is : Crayon Portraiture, for the use of Photographers and amateur artists. (Complete Instructions for making Crayon Portraits on Crayon paper and on Platinum, Silver and Bromide enlargements. Also directions for the use of Transparent Liquid water colours and for making French crystals ). by J. A. BARHYDT, The Baker and Taylor Co. New York, 1892. (This book is now in the possession of Dwarik Chatterji).
- 21 There are 24 in all. The originals are believed to be in the Kalabhavan collection, Santiniketan.
- 22 Abanindranath, in his Jorasankor Dhare, has given a detailed information about Okakura's visit and the demonstrations given by the two Japanese painters.
- 23 Binode Bihari Mukherji in his Chronology of Abanindranath's Paintings (V.B.Q., May/Oct. 1942) was also not sure of these dates.
- 24 See his Jorasankor Dhare.
- 25 See the chapter on Indian Society of Oriental Art in Jorasankor Dhare, English translation of this chapter is published in Journal of I.S.O.A., Abanindra Number, 1961.
- 26 O. C. Ganguly, Notes on Japanese Painting and Sculpture, Modern Review, Sept. 1911.
- 27 The importance of the reproductions of Japanese art in the files of the famous magazine KOKKA is noted by Lawrence Binyon, Painting in the Far East, New York, 1908.
- 28 In the first edition of "Jeevansmriti", the illustrations by Gaganendranath are signed only with his initials (G.T.). In the subsequent editions there is also the seal showing Vishnu's feet. This suggests that he started using the seal after c. 1912 and he put the seal on the originals of the illustrations after the first edition which appears in the blocks made from them subsequently.
- 29 Rabindranath Tagore, "My Reminiscences".
- 30 For detailed information on Japanese brush technique see Henry P. Bowie, On the Laws of Japanese Painting, New York, 1951. (This book was first published probably in 1911 and might have been known to Gaganendranath).
- 31 See Bowie, op. cit.
- 32 According to the interpretation of Japanese art by Okakura in his The Ideals of the East, London, 1903.
- 33 Lawrence Binyon, Painting in the Far East, Reprinted by Dover, New York, 1959. Lawrence Binyon, Curator of British Museum, was known to Coomaraswamy. Hence his book would have certainly come to the attention of Tagores. Plate 161 was also reproduced in KOKKA which would be another source through which Gaganendranath may have noticed it.
- 34 O. C. Ganguly in "My Reminiscences of Gaganendranath Tagore" in f.n. 10. op. cit. has described how he began importing Japanese paper and other materials for supplying to Gaganendranath and others.





- 35 Okakura, op. cit.
- 36 See Appendix I(E).
- 37 For a full account of Chaitanya's life see D. C. Sen, History of Bengali Language and literature, Calcutta University, 1911.
- 38 Gaganendranath may have been influenced by Keshab Chandra Sen's sect of "Brahmo Samaj" who had adopted the *samkirtan* in the Vaishnava style for the purpose of propaganda. "The passion of Bhakti (devotion) seized the members and in true Vaishnava style many of them prostrated at each other's feet and especially at the feet of Keshab." See Majumdar, et. al., Advanced History of India, London, 1965.
- 39 His joviality is described by O. C. Ganguly in his obituary, op. cit.
- 40 See Nirad Chaudhary, The Art of Gaganendranath Tagore, Modern Review, March, 1938.
- 41 Compare with his *Omar Khayyam* paintings.
- 42 Like the painting entitled 'April' of Maurice Denis, reproduced in M. Raynal, Modern Painting, Geneva, 1960.
- 43 Some of these are in the collection of Smt. Uma Devi (daughter of Abanindranath) in Calcutta.
- 44 The Englishman, Sept. 4, 1928.
- 45 See Whistler, The Gentle Art of Making Enemies, London, 1890.
- 46 Stella Kramrisch, An Indian Cubist, Rupam, Vol. II, July, 1922.
- 47 Indian Art and Art Crafts, by Stella Kramrisch, R. Srinivasan, T. G. Krishnaswami, Pillai, and W. H. S. Brown. (Five lectures given in connection with the Arts and Crafts Exhibition held during the Theosophical Society's Annual Convention in December, 1922 in Adyar). Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar, Madras, 1923. Stella Kramrisch's interesting article on 'Recent Movements in Western Art' is perhaps one of the first lectures on Modern Art delivered in India.
- 48 As cited in foot-note 11 (also see the Appendix I for selections from the actual press reviews of the time). Here also may be noted that in his book 'The Renaissance in India' by James H. Cousins, Ganesh and Co., Madras, 1918, he had reviewed 1916 and 1918 annual exhibitions of the I.S.O.A. but nowhere he has talked of Gaganendranath's cubist works. This means that there is definite indication that till 1918 Gaganendranath had not yet begun his cubist experiments.
- 49 Rathindranath, op. cit.
- 50 The caricatures were published in the form of two albums—*Birupa Bajra* (The Thunder of Ridicule), 1916; *Reform Screems*, 1921.
- 51 Observed by Rathindranath, op. cit.
- 52 For the reproductions of the works of the Russian painters see Camilla Gray, The Great Experiment, London, 1962.
- 53 For full details of the interview see Appendix.
- 54 Stella Kramrisch, An Indian Cubist, Rupam, July, 1922.





- 55 Lyonel Feininger, Marlborough Gallery Catalogue, New York, 1959. Introduction by Peter Selz.
- 56 Amina kar, Gaganendranath Tagore—A painter of his time, Lalit Kala Contemporary, No. 6, April, 1967.
- 57 Verbally told to the present author by B. B. Mukherji.
- 58 The Englishman, Dec. 15, 1922.
- 59 Information given to the present author through a letter relating to this exhibition, see Appendix II (B).
- 60 O. C. Ganguly, My Reminiscences of G.N.T., Centenary Souvenir, op. cit.
- 61 Statesman, 15th Dec., 1922; Rupam, no. 13 and 14, Jan./June, 1923.
- 62 Statesman, op. cit.
- 63 Gaganendranath did the settings for Phalguni, Post Office, etc. according to O. C. Ganguly, Obituary, op. cit. and Rathindranath, op. cit.
- 64 See A. Nicoll, The Development of Theatre, London, 1966.
- 65 The wellknown books of Gordon Craig are On the Art of Theatre, 1911, and Towards a New Theatre, 1912.
- 66 Nicoll, op. cit.
- 67 Camilla Gray, op. cit.
- 68 Rathindranath, op. cit., A telegram is preserved in the office of the Indian Society of Oriental Art, Calcutta, from Pavlova, thanking Tagore brothers for their hospitality etc. I have overlooked noting its date. Probably it dates in the twenties.
- 69 Camilla Gray, op. cit; Also Larianov and Goncharova, A retrospective Exhibition of Paintings and Designs for the theatre. Arts Council, London, 1961.
- 70 Nicoll, op. cit.
- 71 My attention was drawn to this biographical fact by Dwarik Chatterji, who described it in detail during an interview.
- 72 Camilla Gray, op. cit.
- 73 Feininger, Catalogue, op. cit.
- 74 Abani Bannerji, op. cit. This article is perhaps the first enlightened estimation of Gaganendranath.
- 75 In G.N.T. Centenary Souvenir, op. cit.
- 76 Binoy Kumar Sarkar ( Review of 17th Annual Exhibition of the Indian Society of Oriental Art, Rupam No. 26, 1926 ) characterised the new works of Gaganendranath as “ object lessons in ‘ Pure art ’.” “ It is in such compositions, thoroughly futuristic as they are, that we begin to appreciate without the scaffolding of legends, stories, messages and moralizings, the foundations of genuine artistic sense.”
- 77 For detailed analysis of Cubist movement see John Golding, Cubism—A History and Analysis, London, 1959.
- 78 Also observed by Stella Kramrisch, op. cit.
- 79 Rene Huyghe, Delacroix, 1963.
- 80 See Review of 22nd Annual Exhibition of I.S.O.A., Calcutta, Advance, December, 24th, 1930.



- 81 See D. C. Sen, *op. cit.* and the Press cuttings.
- 82 Abani Bannerji, *op. cit.*
- 83 Now in the Academy of Fine Arts, Calcutta. There are three versions noticed by me.
- 84 Ashok Mitra, Gaganendranath Tagore, L.K.C. No. 2, Feb., 1964. Ashok Mitra has attempted a comparison of European "perspective" and the Indian approach to space but has failed to recognize the manipulation of "perspective" by Gaganendranath.
- 85 Gilbert and Kuhn, *A History of Aesthetics*, London, 1956.
- 86 For Jungian interpretation of the female archetype and its application to art see Erich Neumann's (i) *The Great Mother*, New York, 1954, and (ii) *Architypal world of Henry Moore*.
- 87 Quoted by Erich Neumann, *The Great Mother*, from Sitaram Sastri, *Kaula and other Upanishads*.
- 88 Erich Neumann, *op. cit.*
- 89 Signet Press, Calcutta, 1956. Two manuscripts of fairy tales, belonging to Pulin Sen, are kept in Rabindra Bharati Society, Calcutta. One of them is dated 1333 B.S. = 1926 A.D.
- 90 W. G. Archer, *India and Modern Art*, London, 1959.

7

## RABINDRANATH

- 1 The manuscript is preserved in Rabindra Sadan, Santiniketan.
- 2 See Victoria Ocampo, Tagore on the Banks of the River Plate, in Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1961), a Centenary Volume, Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi, 1961.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Rabindranath wrote this play during 1923 while travelling in western and south India and Ceylon as mentioned by Leonard Emhirst who had accompanied him on this trip. See Leonard Emhirst, *Personal Memories of Tagore*, in Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1961), a Centenary Volume *op. cit.*, The English translation of this play appeared in *V. B. Quarterly*, 1924.
- 5 Exhibitions of Tagore's Paintings :
  - 1 Galerie Pigalle, Paris—May, 1930.
  - 2 Under the Auspices of the India Society, British Indian Rooms, London—June, 1930.
  - 3 Birmingham Art Gallery—July, 1930.
  - 4 Galerie Moller, Berlin—July, 1930.
  - 5 State Art Gallery, Dresden—July, 1930.
  - 6 Gallery Carpari, Munich—July, 1930.
  - 7 Charlottenburg Picture Gallery, Copenhagen, Denmark—August, 1930.
  - 8 State Moscow Museum of New Western Art, Moscow—September, 1930.
  - 9 Messrs. Doll and Richards, Boston—Oct. 1930.



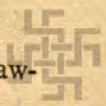


- 10 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston—Oct. 1930.
- 11 The Fifty-Sixth Street Galleries, New York—Nov. 1930.
- 12 The Newman Galleries, Philadelphia,—May, 1931.
- 6 See Leonard Emhirst, op. cit.
- 7 W. G. Archer, India and Modern Art.
- 8 See Rabindranath's letter to Rathenstein in 'Since Fifty, Men and Memories,' 1922-1938, Recollections of William Rathenstein, London.
- 9 Paintings like those in plate 266 are approximately 30" × 25".
- 10 See Rabindranath Tagore, A chronical of Eighty years (1861-1941) in the book cited in foot-note 2.
- 11 Mentioned by Radhacharan Bhagchi, Rabindranath Tagore as a Painter, in Rabindra-nath Tagore : Homage from Vishva Bharati, Santiniketan: 1962. Edited by Santosh Chandra Sen Gupta.
- 12 The interview is published in R.N.T., Letters from Russia, Vishva Bharati, 1960.
- 13 Preserved in Rabindra Sadan, Santiniketan.
- 14 Also preserved at Rabindra Sadan.
- 15 Victoria Ocampo, quotes Romain Rolland who had lamented that the end of the poet's life was sad and that he had taken to painting as a pastime. See Victoria Ocampo, op. cit.
- 16 My Pictures II, 2nd July, 1930 in Tagore, On Art and Aesthetics, International Cultural Centre, New Delhi, 1961.
- 17 Letter, March 30, Tagore.
- 18 Tagore, *ibid.*
- 19 See Rabindranath Tagore, My Reminiscences, 1917.
- 20 Taken from Rabindranath Tagore, Poems, edited by Krishna Kripalani, Vishva Bharati, Calcutta, 1942.
- 21 The letters are quoted in English translation by Ashok Mitra in The Forces behind the Modern Movement, L.K.C. No. 1, June, 1962, New Delhi.
- 22 Art and Tradition, 1926. in Tagore, On Art and Aesthetics.
- 23 Tagore, *ibid.*
- 24 Tagore, *ibid.*
- 25 Tagore, My Pictures I, 28th May, 1930,
- 26 *Ibid.*
- 27 *Ibid.*
- 28 See e.g. Mulk Raj Anand, Rhythm as the essence of his approach to painting, Marg, Vol. XIV, No. 2, March, 1962, Bombay.
- 29 Tagore on Art, My Pictures II.
- 30 See Rudolf Arnheim, Art and Visual Perception, London, 1956.
- 31 See Marinatos and Hirmer, Crete and Mycaenia.
- 32 Letter, March, 1930.
- 33 Letter, 29th Nov., 1928.





- 34 Ibid.
- 35 Ibid.
- 36 See Marcel Jean, *A History of Surrealist Painting*, New York, 1960.
- 37 See *Modern Review*, January, 1917, Calcutta. This article, which includes three illustrated examples, was first noted by Archer, *op. cit.* As it has great singificance for modern art in India I have quoted it here in detail. Leonardo's well-known advice regarding 'assisting the invention' is also mentioned in it which was much brandied about by Max Ernst and the surrealists from about 1920 onwards. '.....if you look at some old wall covered with dirt, or the odd appearance of some streaked stones, you may discover several things like landscapes, battles, clouds, uncommon attitude, draperies etc.....' It is given in Richter, *Note Books of Leonardo da Vinci*, and also by Max Ernst, *Beyond Painting*, New York, 1948.
- 38 Robert Motherwell (Editor), *Dada Painters and Poets*, New York, 1951.
- 39 See Marcel Jean, *op. cit.*
- 40 See Robert Motherwell, *op. cit.*
- 41 Tagore on Art, *My Pictures II*.
- 42 Quoted from his "My Reminiscences".
- 43 Wilhelm Viola, *Child Art*, Kent, 1944.
- 44 Cizek was a painter and not a teacher. Born in 1865 in Bohemia, he came to Vienna at the age of twenty and entered the Academy of Fine Arts. He lived with a poor family where there were many children who wanted to paint too. Cizek used to give them all the material they asked for. He was in close contact with the founders of the "Secession" movements, a kind of revolution of young painters and architects against the old academic art. He showed his friends—among them Klimt, Olbrich, Moser, Otto Wagner—the drawings of his children and these artists were so thrilled that they encouraged Cizek to open what they scarcely liked only to call a school, but, for which they had no other name. There children should be allowed, for the first time, to do what they liked. After a long fight with School Board authorities Cizek was allowed to start his first Juvenile Art Class in 1897. There was no inspector, no curriculum, no time-table and no superior. Thus wrote Viola, *op. cit.* According to her : "Thousands came to Vienna every year to see his work, the greatest numbers coming from Great Britain and America. Long before he was appreciated in his own country (if he ever was) his name was familiar to many English-speaking people. One of the memorable occasions which I shall never forget was the visit of the Maharaja who was carried in a chair to the Juvenile Art Class a few weeks before the "Ausschluss". Years before, Rabindranath came to see Cizek and wrote a poem for him."
- 45 See Viola, *op. cit.*
- 46 Coomaraswamy, Rupam. 1930.
- 47 Mulk Raj Anand, *Marg* Vol. IXIV No. 2, March, 1962, Bombay.
- 48 For various stages of child art, see Helga Eng, *The Psychology of Children's Drawings*, London, 1931, and Herbert Read, *Education through Art*, London, 1945.





- 49 Rathindranath, *On The Edges of Time*.
- 50 Information given by Bauhaus Archive at Darmstadt.
- 51 Art and Tradition, Tagore on Art. In *Servant*, August 11, 1921, R.N.T's recent European tour, A chronological account, it is mentined that R.N.T. was at Weimer, Goethe's city, on his own sixtieth birthday when a programme of songs and recitations from his works was arranged at the German National Theatre.
- 52 Victoria Ocampo, *op. cit.*
- 53 Ratzel, *The History of Mankind*, 1897. It was in a casual discussion with Shri Prabhat Kumar Mukhopadhyaya who mentioned that this book was owned by R.N.T. Shri Mukhopadhyaya was the librarian of Vishvabharati during Tagore's life time.
- 54 Tagore Chronicle—*op. cit.*
- 55 *Ibid.*
- 56 See the Epstein collection of primitive and exotic sculpture. The Arts Council of Great Britain, 1960.
- 57 According to the inscription in the book which is now in Kala Bhavan, Santiniketan.
- 58 Tagore Chronicle, *op. cit.*
- 59 Victoria Ocampo, *op. cit.*
- 60 Rupam, No. 9. Jan. 1922.
- 61 Quoted by Archer.
- 62 See Archer, *India and Modern Art*.
- 63 *Ibid.*
- 64 *Ibid.*
- 65 Iredill Jenkins, *Art and Human Enterprise*, 1958.
- 66 F. R. Lewis, *The Poetic Image*, 1958.
- 67 Geeta Kapoor. *Indian Art in the 1960s*. *Marg*, Vol. XXI, No. 1, December 1967.
- 68 Erich Neumann—*The Great Mother*.
- 69 Archer has made extensive comparisons of Rabindranath's ideas on the creative process with those of Klee without actually pointing out visual affinities by juxtaposing examples of their paintings.

## 8

## CONCLUSION

- 1 Gombrich, *Art and Illusion*, London, 1960.
- 2 B.B.M., V.B.Q., *May/Oct. 1942*.
- 3 Jaya Appasamy, *Abanindranath Tagore and the Art of His Times*, New Delhi, 1969.
- 4 Stella Kramrisch, *The Genius of A.N.T.*, V.B.Q., *May/Oct. 1942*.
- 5 James Cousins, *The Renaissance in India*, Madras, 1918.
- 6 W. G. Archer, *India and Modern Art*.
- 7 A.N.T., Sadanga, J.I.S.O.A., 1961.





- 8 ( i ) Anonymous article on G.T., in Welfare ( Appendix I ( D ) ).
- ( ii ) Abani Bannerji, note 3, Chapter VI.
- ( iii ) Stella Kramrisch, An Indian Cubist, Rupam, 1922.
- ( iv ) G. Venkatachalam, Contemporary Indian Painters, Bombay.
- 9 ( i ) Bishnu Dā, Review of India and Modern Art, V.B.Q., Summer, 1959.
- ( ii ) Amina Kar, L.K.C., No. 2.
- 10 A.N.T., On Rabindranath's Art, V.B.Q., May/Oct., 1942.
- 11 B. Croce, Aesthetics as Science of Expression and General Linguistic, London, 1922.
- 12 Archer, op. cit.
- 13 ".....Every genuine poetical creation must have preceded from more than one impulse in the mind of the poet, and must admit of more than one interpretation." Quoted by A. Hauser, The Philosophy of Art History, London, 1959.
- 14 Daniel E. Schneider, The Psychoanalyst and the Artist, New York, 1962.
- 15 They seem to cry to us, "See, here I am", and our mind bows its head and never questions, "Why are you?" R.N.T. in 'My Pictures' III. See also letter, 1941.
- 16 R.N.T. Letter to Rothenstein.
- 17 R.N.T., My Pictures, III. Rightly Stella Kramrisch and B. B. Mukherji have analysed the pictorial components of Rabindranath and his evolution. See :
  - ( 1 ) Stella Kramrisch, ( i ) The Drawings of R.N.T., V.B.Q., Vol. 26, Nos. 3 and 4, 1962, ( ii ) Four Elements in the Visual Work of R.N.T., L.K.C., No.2, 1964.
  - ( 2 ) B. B. Mukherji, Evolution of R.N.T's Art, V.B.Q., Vol. 26, Nos. 3 and 4, 1962. Prithish Neogi also restricts himself to pictorial appraisal, see his Drawings and Paintings of R.N.T., New Delhi, 1961.





## APPENDICES

(The material included here is selected for their documentary value. Because of their inaccessability they have not received due attention so far, The present author may claim some credit for bringing them to light, I(A), (B) and (D) are preserved in a file of press-cuttings in the office of I.S.O.A., Calcutta, I(C) was discovered in one of the numerous files of press-cuttings preserved in Rabindra Sadan, Santiniketan ).

I—(A) Numbers 1 to 9, extracts, mostly referring to the paintings of Gaganendranath Tagore, from the press reviews of the Annual Art Exhibitions held by the Indian Society of Oriental Art in Culcutta, between 1920 and 1930.

(B) Obituary of Gaganendranath.

(C) Extracts from an interview of Gaganendranath.

(D) An anonymous article on Gaganendranath based on a one-man Exhibition of his works, probably held in 1928.

(E) Catalogue list of the works of Gaganendranath, included in the Exhibition of Calcutta painters held in London during 1914, which is the first listing of his works till that date. (A photostat copy of the entire catalogue is in the office of the I.S.O.A., Calcutta ).

II—(A) Numbers 1 to 3, extracts from press-reviews of the exhibition of German Expressionist (mostly Bauhaus ) watercolours and graphics that was held in Calcutta during December, 1922. These are the only available Indian documents about the first exhibition of modern European art in our country.

(B) Letter received in reply to my enquiry from Bauhaus Archive, Darmstadt, (through W. German consulate, Bombay ) regarding the above exhibition giving a list of all participating artists.

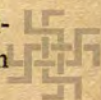
### Appendix I(A)—Numbers 1 to 9

#### 1—*The Englishman*—28-12-22

Gaganendranath Tagore.....His recent excursions to cubist formula are undoubtedly pilgrimages at the shrine of modern European art. But his return to his own studies has given us a house of mystery.....

#### 2—*The Englishman*, *Saturday*, 5-1-1924

I.S.O.A., Cubism exhibited in Calcutta ( Name of the author R. C. B. ) ( The exhibition to be opened today by the Governor, probably the best exhibition held so far in Calcutta ).





.....What catches the eye at once on entering are the splendid examples of cubism exhibited by that great artist Gaganendranath Tagore. This represents an absolutely new phase of oriental art and demands the utmost attention. The colouring is gorgeous and the whole effect little short of wonderful. Raja Duryodhana in Maidanab's Crystal Palace (12) and several others adorn the walls. The visitor will of course decide for himself or herself which is the best but the choice will be very difficult, but it would be hard to beat 'Aladin and the Wonderful Lamp'.....The main interest of the exhibition however will centre in Gaganendranath Tagore's pictures. Though not entirely deserting the old traditions he has struck out on new lines. He has shown how completely he is the master of his new style and how beautiful and efficacious it may be made. Another picture of Gaganendranath Tagore's that will leave a very deep impression for its poetry, its technique and general effect is "Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed."

3—*The Statesman*, Sunday, Jan. 6, 1924

Modern Indian Art—"Cubist pictures in Calcutta", Abanindranath Tagore has succeeded rather well in at least a couple of portraits on cloth. "Shah Jehan" has dignity with a judicious and pleasant colour scheme which the luminous patches on the sleeves do not disturb. The same method with very nearly the same result is employed in "Alamgir" and both pictures are flat and patternesque rather than vital or representative.

#### *Adapted Cubism*

Perhaps one of the most interesting features of the exhibition is the clever adaptations of cubism by Gaganendranath Tagore. Unadulterated cubism particularly in its more advanced forms—takes a good deal of understanding, and it is doubtful if one or two of this artist's works received too much appreciation from those present. But his "Symphony" contains a novel blending of the rigid telling lines of cubism with the mystical lighting effects reminiscent of Rembrandt. The colouring, however, is too cold and glassy, while melodrama is just avoided by its frank idealism.

"Maidanab's crystal palace" is a less fortunate effort. Its colour is hazy and cheap and there is a lack of dignity about it which is anything but satisfactory.

Such pictures cannot be dealt with in a manner intelligible to the ordinary "layman" unless it is explained that cubism is not out to produce a purely representative picture, but to give pleasure mainly by the strength and rugged wholesomeness of its effect. It is a deliberate attempt to break a tradition—the tradition of a prepared technique with its inevitable insipidity and lifelessness.

4—*Forward*—Sunday, Jan. 6, 1924

Babu Gaganendranath Tagore is seen again as one of the finest painters of light, whether it be the blue luminosity of twilight or the glow of a hidden lamp. But his chief contribution to the year's work is in his series of modernist paintings. These nominally cubists are saved from being a mere reproduction of a special method by the happy intrusion



of the artist's own genius. It may not be a compliment from the strict cubist point of view, to say that they are pictorially intelligible, but this intelligibility arises out of the extraordinary beauty of colour of the pictures, and the sense of unity in ensemble. They are less pictures indeed, than visible music and pulsating light.

5—*The Indian Daily News*.—*Saturday, Jan, 10-1924*

Oriental art exhibition.

An appreciation by Dr. Stella Kramrisch.

.....Gaganendranath Tagore's cubism, though derived from the rational basis of western form speculation, organizes a crystalized world of storyteller's imagination into an unbroken colour-scheme as insipid at times as it is rich and cool when at its best. But the speculative charm of spellbound aerial prisms is invaded by a host of figures of fairyland and its geometric accuracy cannot avoid suggesting here and there a seductive profile, shadow or outline of human form. No. 13 (Alladin) enshrined in the treasury of day dream bubble. No. 106 (The city of Dwarka on the eve of doom) involuntarily Greco-like in the speed of tumbling colour surfaces, No. 197 (Festivities) in cleverly decorative motion, and No. 109 (Memory's Picture Gallery) in ecstatic passiveness and amused contemplation, are above literature and playfulness, which No. 12 (The birth of a song) and No. 2 (Raja Duryodhana in Maidnab's Crystal Palace) could not transgress.

6—*The Englishman*—*Jan, 29-1925*

Oriental Art Exhibition.

A distinct advance on previous shows. New methods (by R. C. B.)

.....The most notable of course is Gaganendranath Tagore's 'Cubism'. Cubism is an acquired taste and indeed an acquired habit and during the last two years Mr. Gaganendranath Tagore has acquired the habit. There are four striking pictures. The 'Last Journey of Yudhishtira' (119) 'Bed of Arrows' (117), the Echo (123) and Movement (124). Whether one likes cubism or not, one cannot help being struck and indeed fascinated by these pictures. Gaganendranath Tagore, like his eminent brother Abanindranath Tagore is very versatile and one turns from his cubism to some charming pictures in a totally different style. For example, there are two pictures on gold paper the Golden Temple and the Golden Himalayas—which are very delightful.

Then again he has painted a picture 'Sunrise in Ranchi' which puts one in mind of Turner.

7—*The Englishman*—*Saturday, Dec. 19-1925*

But through lanes known only to himself Gaganendranath Tagore knows how to reach quickest the land of fairies and spirits. Trained by Japanese impressionism as well as by Western cubism he utilizes these two modes of sophisticated abstraction in a purely personal way. Equally responsive to the charm of surfaces as to the hidden meaning of appearance. Gaganendranath Tagore becomes the master painter of the Himalayan moun-



tains (No. 128). Wrapt in the multicoloured mist of passing moments, but he also relishes those garish stage effects that life has in store and it with the wisdom of the stage manager and the humour of the story-teller who appreciates children as the best audience, that he makes "The Deserted house tell its owner's fate" (No. 133) and tells "that in tide of yore and in time long gone before, there lived a Princess." The portrait of "The Revealer" (No. 136) is the work of all his susceptibilities combined.

8—*Special exhibition of Gaganendranath Tagore in Banglore.*

(Review by G. V. (i.e. G. Venkatachalam) No date given. probably 1926. The extracts are abbreviated) 20 pictures shown from different periods. Became famous as 'Sunset' painter, appreciated in Salons of Paris etc. Pictures exhibited included "Alladin", "Captive light" and "Princess". "The Story of Solitude", "Padmini and Udayasagar" (companion picture of Song of the Solitude), also "Ranchi", "Arjuna and Chitrangada" and "the Golden sands at Puri. "Captive light"—best elements of impressionism and cubism, where the fugitive light is caught so cleverly in the recesses of corridors, staircases, vaults and arches and is made to illuminate the dark depths.

9—*Advance—Dec. 24-1930*

Review of 22nd Annual exhibition of Indian Society of Oriental Art, opened by Lady Jackson.

(Mention of Abanindranath Tagore's Arabian Nights, many details of modern life included in it)

.....A very sad interest hovers round the series of "Post-cubist" sketches in ink from the pen of Gaganendranath Tagore, not unfortunately the productions of this year, for by an unhappy malady the artist has been prevented from making new contributions such as those that have been the regular features of this annual show. It is hoped that the artist will soon get the better of his infirmity to be able to resume his brush, for his contributions have been the backbone of the movement in their daring originality and universal quality.

**Appendix I (B)**

*Amrit Bazar Patrika—1938*

Obituary of Gaganendranath Tagore by O. C. Ganguly (Extracts)

Following an attack of pneumonia, Gaganendranath Tagore died at 11-30 last night at the age of 71. He had been almost an invalid for the last 9 years due to attack of paralysis but the immediate cause of his death was an attack of pneumonia which was detected only last morning. Lady Harringham, Rothenstein, Okakura, Taikan, Marquis of Zetland, Lord Carmichael were among the admirers.

Gaganendra was of a quiet and retiring nature all through his life and always avoided the limelight of publicity.



As early as 1911, he published a set of brush drawings of animal and figure subjects (Studies of crows and a series of sketches of pilgrims at the Puri temple) which at once won for him a place in contemporary art. (Ganguly emphasises his individual genius and invention).

*Connoisseur and critic—Tagore collection owed its existence to his trained eyes.*

The Indian society of Oriental art and the school run by it was planned organized and carried out by his untiring energy and enthusiasm. He was the backbone of the society from its birth.....Those who recall the first performance of "Baikunther Katha" as early as 1912 at his residence, would testify to his powers of dramatic productions and inventions of stage effects. The later developments of stage crafts in Calcutta—attested by the triumphal productions of "Falguni", "Post office" and various other plays—were particularly due to Gaganendranath Tagore's versatility and artistic improvisations. He was a very kind man, a Prince of Manners, a Prince in heart and a Prince in Bounty. His personal magnetism was a great asset in all social events and for over a decade, his remarkable figure, with streaks of grey hair and beaming smiles, spotlessly dressed with immaculate taste, has dominated over the social life of Calcutta.....No "at home", no "garden party", no social receptions, no public meetings in Calcutta could miss him and his picturesque figure.

#### Appendix I (C)

*The Bombay Chronical—30th June, 1926*

by Kanaïyalal H. Vakil

'The Art World'. Some Prominent Figures (Extracts from an interview).

#### *The Cubist*

Mr. Gaganendranath Tagore has by his bold experiments in cubism, shocked the conservative minds of many of his friends and admirers. He is as himself suggests, a radical by temperament. He is, he feels, free, as an artist, to employ any medium and any technique he finds necessary for his creative work. His experiments in cubism may not, he admits, appear relevant to Indian art.

"Surely, you do not suggest that your new experiments have been altogether useless for your treatment of Indian themes".

"On the contrary, they have," he replied promptly, "enabled me to discover new paths and I am now expressing them better with my new technique developed out of my experiment in cubism than I used to do with my old methods. The new technique is really wonderful as a stimulant." His friends might regard his experiments in cubism as only an intellectual pastime. Mr. Gaganendranath Tagore is not prepared to accept this view for he is absolutely serious about the new path he has discovered for himself.

#### Appendix I (D)

*Welfare (Magazine) September 24. 1928*

(No author mentioned)

Painting in Bengal—The art of Gaganendranath Tagore.





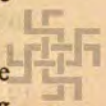
The remarkable exhibition of the works of Gaganendranath Tagore which was held in the rooms of the Indian Society of Oriental Art, came to close on Friday. It afforded a special opportunity for studying the work of Mr. Tagore as a whole. The organizers of the exhibition took special pains to make it as representative as possible. and though examples in European and American collections could not be procured on loan, the number, the range and the quality of the works displayed came as a surprise even to those who have tried to follow Mr. Tagore's work from year to year in the annual exhibitions of the society. It was certainly an exhibition which justified great hopes for the future of painting in Bengal.

By this time every cultured man and woman in Bengal has probably become familiar with the cartoons of Gaganendranath Tagore. Would it be an impertinence to suggest a new subject for him? Here, for example, is a subject, rich with possibilities... "Indian gentleman standing before a drawing of his and trying to get at its 'art'." Mr. Tagore is, I believe, cultured enough to be capable of playing an ironical trick with his own work, but if in a mood of self-critical whimsicality he were actually to do it, we should hang our heads in shame not for his "bewildering" and "inexplicable" work but for ourselves who can no longer enjoy form and colour simply and directly, when we came across them, but must grope for a label to help our unseeing eyes and blunted sensibilities.

Every work of art, Mr. Roger Fry once wrote, comes to us with a letter of introduction, and Mr. Tagore's drawings possess, as everybody knows, two formidable letters of recommendation from cubism on the one hand and from "Indian art" on the other. There are few cultured people in Bengal who have the courage to resist either or both. That is the reason why an attempt to appraise his work soon loses its way in a fruitless controversy about the merits of these two controversial phenomena.

This is very unjust, and seems to be still more stupid. But the preoccupation with extraneous, non-pictorial considerations in judging a painter is not to be met within this country alone. One of the characteristic features of the artistic activities of this age is that in it good art, all the world over, has become rebellious. A painter or sculptor who wants to achieve something original and distinctive and will not meekly submit to the standard set by mass emotion and democratic aesthetics, the standard that is to say, of the moving picture and picture post-card has to work outside the banal limits of popular academies. He is at war with the prevailing taste not in harmony with it. Things were not so in the great ages of Halian, the Chinese, Indian or Japanese art. It seemed then, as if the spring time of art, had come hand in hand with a mysterious blossoming of the feeling for beauty of a whole nation. This spontaneity and singleness of purpose which struck a note of instinctive sureness in all their work is gone for ever. Its place has been taken by a conscious and deliberate search for the beautiful and significant form. That is where the weakness of all modern artistic movements lie.

The Rajput painter who sought for no aesthetic justification of his work except in the judgement of his fellow-craftsmen and patrons proceeded on right lines in his unquestioning





simple way. Matisse and Derain, again proceeded on right lines in another way. They may be disconcerting, but they are determined to follow their own severe lights in their quest of the beautiful. But what is one to think of the hesitating crowd divided hopelessly between temperamental maudlinity and theoretical awe of formulae. If left to himself the indiscriminating bourgeois would much rather gloat over the picture of a sickly girl pining for her lover, but the relentless art critics never leave him in peace. They bully him into an object surrender before unmeaning things help up before his eyes for unquestioning admiration. The result for both parties is as deplorable as an unhappy marriage. Probably in the end, it is painting and the painter who suffers most. Mr. Tagore's is a case in point. He has been affiliated with the school of painting founded by Dr. Abanindranath Tagore, on the one hand, and the cubist schools of Europe on the other. The emphasis laid by the critics on these two accidental features of his work has put the public on a false scent. It has hidden from view the essential fact that Mr. Tagore is another example of a great artist, the artist that is to say, who adopts any artistic convention that happens to be in fashion in his eyes, yet always contrives to rise above it. No-one perhaps, would have dreamt of including him in the modern Bengali school had he not been the brother of its founder, and his manipulation of the cubist formula will, I am sure be more than resented by the puritan of that very doctrinaire school. Every thoughtful observer of his work in the exhibition must have noted with surprise how soon he had ceased to worry about the conventions of Gaganendranath Tagore's art. A knowledge of the "six limbs of the Indian painting" or the doctrines of cubist and futurist schools is not really an indispensable and distracting preliminary to a keen enjoyment of his drawings. He has been eclectic in his choice of styles. But the style in which he has embodied his vision is the least important thing about him. That is what distinguished his work from that of his contemporaries which too often degenerate into mere pastiche.

This is not the place for an exhaustive appraisal of Gaganendranath Tagore's work as a painter. But one quality of his genius as a painter should be noted in passing. He is a pure painter. He has shown himself a great painter in the originality and the intenseness of his vision and in the ease with which he can transform any conventional form into a virile and significant composition. He is no less great in his rigid adherence to the possibilities of restrictions, too, of his chosen medium of expression. In his works there is no irrelevant call for help to poetry, the legends, music, morality or sentiment, to pretty names and pretty conceptions. to the unending series of sugary themes, with cloying abundance of garlands, dreams of withered leaves and calls of the unknown. He is not, on the other hand a purist, of the formal school, who leaves the psychological content of his pictures severely alone and devotes himself exclusively to a search for the abstractly beautiful form. This type of painter has become quite common in the advance artistic circles of Europe. Had Gaganendranath Tagore been of this type he could not have made himself the keen interpreter of psychological values his cartoons and his portrait studies reveal him to be. But in him, the profundity of the psychological content owes nothing to extraneous, non-pictorial sources. His drawings were evoked as inspired visions, and



they appeal through the eyes and eyes alone. A fastidious visitor put them to the test of being looked at without the catalogue. The result justified the experiment. He found himself compelled to stop before a score of pictures with a deliciously sharp sense of unexpected pleasure. This, one must admit, is a hard test to put a picture to. None but a first-rate craftsman is likely to come out creditably from it. Mr. Tagore does. The judgement of contemporaries is inevitably bound to be slightly distorted in perspective. But is it too much to say that Gaganendranath Tagore is a great painter, perhaps, the only great painter Bengal has produced.

### Appendix I (E)

*Victoria and Albert Museum—Indian Section. Catalogue of paintings of the New Calcutta School lent by the Indian Society of Oriental Art, Calcutta .*

*April and May 1914*

London. Printed under the authority of His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1914.

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(Extracts)

Prefatory Note by Cecil Smith.

Paintings collected by I.S.O.A. also lent from the collections of Havell and Coomaraswamy. Queen Mary lent "The Jealousy of Queen Tissarakshita".

Introduction by C. Stanely Clarke

"Gaganendranath Tagore, a very gifted amateur, who contributes to the exhibition a series of illustrations of the life of Chaitanya (Nos. 67 to 79) and impressionist studies in the streets of Calcutta (Nos. 93 to 95), has worked entirely under the tuition of Japanese artists". Page 5

### *Gaganendranath Tagore*

67-79—Series illustrating scenes from the life of Chaitanya.

67 The birth of Chaitanya.

68 Chaitanya's first experience of divine love.

69 Chaitanya's master (Guru) showing him the impress of Vishnu's feet.

70 The sacred dance.

71 After the departure of Chaitanya from his home.

72 At the master's door.

73 He makes his vows as an ascetic.

74 Chaitanya's last farewell to his mother.

75 His sorrow when meditating upon the unknown.

76 On the way to the temple of Jagannath, Puri.

77 Chaitanya in ecstasy at the foot of the altar.





- 78 Chaitanya hears the call of the sea.
- 79 Chaitanya attains Nirvana.
- 80 After the Fire or the burning of the lac pavilion. (The incident from Mahabharata).
- 81 Portrait.
- 82 Portrait of the Grand Panda of Bhuvaneswer, Puri.
- 83 Profile portrait.
- 84 The huka.
- 85 Portrait.
- 86 Portrait.
- 87 Portrait.
- 88 The astrologer.
- 89 Study of a man reading.
- 90 The Pundits.
- 91 Portrait of an old man.
- 92 Portrait.
- 93-95—Three studies :—In the streets of Calcutta.
- 93 A rainy evening.
- 94 Post-office Clerks going to work.
- 95 The feast of Lamps (Diwali).
- 96-103—Eight studies in gold and black. The pilgrimage at Puri, Orissa.
- 96 The sun-bathed sands.
- 97 Pilgrims going to the temple.
- 98 At the temple door.
- 99 Across the dark passage.
- 100 The priests.
- 101 Before the holy image.
- 102 Before the altar.
- 103 The end.
- 104 Sepia study. A woman seated, lent by A.K.C.
- 105 Sepia study. The temple of Jagannath at Puri, lent by A.K.C.
- 106 Water colour study—before the holy image, lent by A.K.C.

## Appendix II (A)

1—*Statesman*—Dec. 15, 1922

Indian Society of Oriental Art, Modern painting. Novel features of annual exhibition.

.....“The private view which will be open to members.....particularly in conjunction with the two new sections which help to make the forthcoming exhibition of unique interest.

The first section is occupied by a series of clever sketches in oil of Indian scenes by that talented amateur from Paris, Mlle. Andre Karpeles, who has been a constant exhi-



bitor in all the French Art Shows, particularly those of the Societes des Artistes Decorateurs des peintres Orientalistes Francaise. She is an acting member of the Association Francaise des Amis de l'Orient recently started in Paris for the development and appreciation of Oriental art. Her portrait of Dr. Rabindranath Tagore attracted considerable attention. She is best known by her series of original illustrations to the books 'Les classiques de L'Orient', published by Bossard.

The second section.....devoted to the works of modern Indian artists including those of the members of Kalabhavan, Shantiniketan. But the third section represents the most novel features of this year's show, namely the original works of a number of Russian, Swiss and other continental artists who are contributing the very latest phase to the movements in modern European painting. Of their kinsmen in England, Mr. Wyndham Lewis is represented in the section by a very interesting example of his earlier work. By far the most important and leading figure in this section is Wassily Kandinsky, the eminent Russian artist, who is very happily represented by worthy examples from his brush. The development of the latest forms of 'Post-Impressionism' and 'expressionism' will be adequately illustrated in a series of pictures, etchings and prints which carry the phase as late as the middle of 1922.

## 2—*The Englishman*—Dec. 15, 1922

(On the same exhibition as discussed in Statesman of 15/12/1922). (This correspondent also mentions the opening date of the exhibition as 23rd Dec., 1922).

(Additional information on Andre Karpeles : She organized an Exhibition of Modern Indian Pictures in Paris in 1914. She made also portrait of Abanindranath Tagore, now in Musee Guimet. Her works represent the old academic tradition of French Art and happily avoid the debateable features of modernism that have taken shape in recent development in the French movement).

The latter phases of modern European painting form another feature of the society's exhibition which has devoted a section to the works of modern continental artists, chiefly led by the great Russian, Kandinsky and his followers and colleagues in kindred movements. The lectures that the author of "The Art of Spiritual Harmony" recently delivered in Berlin have helped to revive interest in a phase of modern European painting which is claiming to discover emancipation in new forms of art undreamt of in its previous history. Original works representing those new movements have never been exhibited in India, and the society may be well congratulated on its enterprise in putting together examples of these latest movements in the West.

## 3—*Rupam* No. 13 and 14, Jan.-June 1923—Page 18

The 14th Annual Exhibition of Indian Society of Oriental Art. Review of the Exhibition which included the German paintings.

.....The section devoted to works of the modern continental artists deserves notice. Very few people in India have an opportunity to study the inclinations and the aims of



the new exponents of "Pure Art Values" which a section of Modern European painters are preaching as the goal of the Art of Tomorrow. The following extract from the introductory note to the catalogue will be found interesting: "It is for the first time that western art is represented in India by a number of the most advanced and most sincere works of leading continental artists. They do not belong to any school, but come from different parts of Europe, each having his own manner and technique. The artists met in Weimer and in spite of their variety of form found themselves united in their aim to realise the eternal truth of all art and to visualize it, by the means supplied by the present age, in their creed. They joined hands and became the masters of a state-school of art, and the method of their teaching is to hold up the example of their own inspired truthfulness and severe discipline. Neither masters nor students are the followers of any "isms" although they are bound to make use of them to a greater or smaller extent. For "Cubism" or "Post-Impressionism" are conventions of form, developed out of the need of the moment, and no artist in whom the present is alive can escape their formulae.

Kandinsky, the Russian painter, has been for more than ten years the herald of the "Spiritual in art". His power of abstraction is unswerving, put into action as it is by the fervour of a mysticism which has no other name but that of Russia. He was the first to paint pictures without any subject matter. He avoided all allusions to literature and nature and so made himself free to infuse his inner experience into mere lines and mere colours which are organized into compositions of intoxicating harmony. Kandinsky is the expressionist among the painters. If the end of civilization foretold by Europe of the present day is to come true, it must be said that the artists are fighting heroically their last forlorn fight. But all death means resurrection and art in itself is immortal. The Indian public should study this exhibition, for then they may learn that European art does not mean naturalism and that the transformation of the forms of nature in the work of an artist is common to ancient and modern India and inevitable expression of the life of soul of artistic genius."

## Appendix II ( B )

Generalkonsulat der Bundesrepublik  
Deutschland, Consulate General of  
the Federal Republic of Germany

Az. : Ku IV 2-88/2296

( Bitte bei Antwort angeben )

Professor Parimoo,  
Fine Arts Faculty,  
University of Baroda,  
Pratap Ganj,  
Baroda 2.

Dear Professor Parimoo,

Bombay, Indien—India, "Dugal House",  
Road No. 3, Backbay-Reclamation,  
Bombay-1.

Fernsprecher : 246023-246025

Telegrammanschrift : Consugerma Bombay  
Bombay, 6 Oktober, 1967





Mr. Jansen some weeks ago informed me of the most interesting research work you are carrying out on the influence of German expressionism and the Bauhaus School on Indian Art.

Therefore I asked the Bauhaus-Archive, Darmstadt, Germany, for some more details about the exhibition of German artists which was held in the early twenties.

Following is the text of the reply of the Bauhaus-Archive :

“ There was indeed an exhibition of the Bauhaus—in Calcutta in 1922 which was arranged following a suggestion of Rabindranath Tagore. This exhibition was sponsored by the Indian Society of Oriental Art. The exhibition consisted of 19 drawings and 16 woodcuts by Lyonel Feininger, 23 drawings by Johannes Itten, 4 aquarelles by Wassily Kandinsky, 9 aquarelles by Paul Klee, 20 woodcuts by Gerhard Marcks, 9 etchings by Georg Muche, 7 graphical works by Lothar Schreyer, 2 aquarelles by Sophie Korner and a few drawings and aquarelles by Margit Tery-Adler.”

However, this valuable collection did never return to Germany. The Indian Society of Oriental Art in Calcutta even did not acknowledge receipt of these works of art. The only trace which was found in the meantime was a detailed review which appeared in the Journal “ Rupam ” ( Nr. 13/14, January-June, 1923 ).

The Indian Society of Oriental Art in Calcutta did never reply to the letters and requests sent from Germany also later on. It would be most interesting to trace the fate of the exhibition, and perhaps your work may contribute to this result.

It is most likely that the Bauhaus style influenced Indian artists as the author of the review in Rupam enthusiastically praised the exhibition, especially Kandinsky.

Please keep me informed on the progress of your work.

In the meantime,

I am

Sincerely yours,

Sd/- ( G. KUNZ )





## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

### Note :

ANT indicates painted by Abanindranath, GT stands for Gaganendranath and RNT stands for Rabindranath.

Titles are printed in italics. No title is given when not known.

RBS = Rabindra Bharati Society, Calcutta; BKB = Bharat Kala Bhavan, Banaras; NGMA = National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi; IM = Indian Museum, Calcutta,

When no collection is given it means that the present author has not been able to trace the original. All the paintings of RNT reproduced here are in Santiniketan unless otherwise mentioned.

In the case of ANT, medium is not mentioned if it is in the 'wash' technique. In the case of GT watercolour also indicates that the painting is multicoloured whereas ink stands for black or monochrome. For RNT, colour indicates the use of coloured inks.

S/d = signed and dated.

ANT signed his paintings in Devnagri, Roman and in persianized Bengali scripts using his first name. GT usually used his initials (GT) whereas RNT also signed his paintings with his first name. (see page 113 for further information on the latter's signatures).

- 1 Shiv Dayal Lal, *Musicians*, painting on mica, Patna, c. 1865.
- 2 *Nirrita riding on a man's shoulders*, Trichinopoly, c. 1820.
- 3 Mrs. Bānos. *The Return from Kalighat*, from Twenty Four Plates Illustrative of Hindu and European Manners in Bengal, 1832. (an example of the sketches of an European amateur in India).
- 4 Pestonji Bomanji, *Self Portrait*, c. 1910.
- 5 V. Bouguereau, *Biblis*, Salarjung Museum, Hyderabad.
- 6 Ravi Varma, *Hansa Damyanti*, Trivendram. (compare with no. 5).
- 7 Dhurandhar, *Kaikeyi and Manthra*, Modern Review, Aug. 1909.
- 8 J. P. Ganguly, *His Day's Reward*, MR, May 1911. (the theme is similar to the *Angelus* of Millet).
- 9 H. Majumdar, *Water Blossoms*, c. 1920.
- 10 E. B. Havell, *A decorative design*. (comparable to William Morris' wall papers).
- 11 ANT, pen and ink drawings, between 1890-95.
- 12 Millet, *Woman carrying water*, black chalk, c. 1865. (compare nos. 11 and 12).
- 13 ANT, page from RNT's *Chitrangada*, 1892.
- 14 ANT, *Avisar*, c. 1895.
- 15 ANT, *Portrait of Rabindranath*, pastel, c. 1890-95. Bose Institute, Calcutta.





- 16 ANT, *Portrait of Debendranath*, pastel, c. 1890-95.
- 17 ANT, *Birth of Krishna*, gouache, c. 1895, RBS.
- 18 ANT, *Krishna and the Gopis*, gouache, c. 1895, RBS. (both are from *Krishna Lila* set).
- 19 ANT, *Ritu Samhar*, c. 1895-1900, IM.
- 20 Basohli, *Rasika Priya*.
- 21 Kangra, *Sit Vihar*, originally in Tagore collection, now in Kasturbhai Lalbhai coll, Ahmedabad.
- 22 ANT, *Abhisarika*, c. 1900, IM.
- 23 ANT, *Siddhas of the Upper Air*, c. 1900, IM.
- 24 Burnes Jones, *Sponsa De Libano*, c. 1880.
- 25 Kangra (detail).
- 26 ANT, *Buddha and Sujata*, c. 1900.
- 27 Burnes Jones, *Pelicans*, c. 1900.
- 28 ANT, *Ramachandra and the Deer*, c. 1900-5.
- 29 Toorop, *Girl with Swans*, lithograph, 1895-96.
- 30 Beardsley, *Salome kissing the head of John the Baptist*, wood cut, illustration for Oscar Wilde's *Salome*, 1893.
- 31 ANT, *Azan*, from *Omar Khayyam* set, c. 1905-9. probably in Santiniketan.
- 32 ANT, *The Traveller and the Lotus*, c. 1900. IM.
- 33, 34, 35. ANT, *Kacha and Devayani*, sketch, water colour study and slab in Jaipur fresco process, c. 1905. No. 34, the fresco slab, is in Government College of Arts and Crafts, Calcutta. ANT did another fresco slab which is in IM, depicting pair of faces of Radha and Krishna.
- 36 ANT, *Shah Jahan*, c. 1910-15.
- 37 ANT, *Building of the Taj*, dated 1901, RBS, exhibited at the Delhi Durbar Exhibition, 1902.
- 38 (Mughal), Nadir-uz-Zaman, *Shah Jahan Enthroned*, c. 1650.
- 39 ANT, *Death of Shah Jahan*, oil, c. 1900, RBS. awarded a medal at the Delhi Durbar Exhibition.
- 40 (Mughal), Goverdhan, *Abul Fazl presenting the second volume of the Akbar Nama to Akbar*, c. 1602-5.
- 41 Pahari, *Lover's Quarrel*, 18th Cent.
- 42 ANT, canto II, *Omar Khayyam*, Santiniketan.
- 43 ANT, *Head of Dara*, c. 1905, RBS.
- 44 ANT, *The Last Journey*, c. 1912. There are more than one versions of this painting, one of them is in NGMA.
- 45 ANT, *Shah Jahan Dreaming of the Taj*, c. 1909.
- 46 ANT, *The Old Gardener*, from the *Omar Khayyam* set, c. 1905, BKB.
- 47 ANT, *Devadasi*, c. 1912.
- 48 ANT, *Kajari Dance*, c. 1912.





- 49 ANT, *Tissarakshita*, c. 1912.
- 50 ANT, from *Bengal Actors* set, c. 1915, RBS.
- 51, 52. ANT, illustrations for RNT's Parrot's Training, 1916, RBS.
- 53 ANT, *Peacock*, c. 1916, RBS.
- 54, 55. ANT, *RNT in Phalguni*, c. 1916, RBS.
- 56, 59. ANT, from *Playmate series*, c. 1915-20, RBS.
- 57 (Japanese), Sosen, *Deer*, (compare nos. 56 and 57).
- 58 ANT, *Crocodile*, c. 1930, RBS.
- 60 ANT, *Landscape*, c. 1910, RBS.
- 61 ANT, *Moonrise*, before 1920, RBS.
- 62, 63. ANT, *Shahzadpur*, before 1920, RBS.
- 64 ANT, *The Chinese Traveller*, c. 1915-20, NGMA.
- 65 ANT, *Bhutia Girl*, c. 1915-20.
- 66 ANT, *Javanese Dancer*, c. 1915-20.
- 67 (Japanese), Matabei, *Dancer*, (compare no. 66 with no. 67).
- 68 ANT, *Woman with a gold necklace*, c. 1920-25, RBS.
- 69 ANT, *Malini*, c. 1910-15, coll : Pulin Sen, Calcutta.
- 70 ANT, *Broken Flute*, c. 1920.
- 71 (Japanese), *The Priest Gonzo*, detail of a hanging scroll, silk, 12th cent.
- 72 ANT, *Nurjahan*, 1920-21.
- 73 ANT, *Zebunnissa*, c. 1921, RBS. (compare nos. 72 and 73 with no. 74).
- 74 (Japanese), Tanyu, *Monjiu*.
- 75 ANT, *Aurangzeb Alamgir*, on cloth, c. 1922.
- 76 ANT, *Portrait of RNT*, pastel, before 1930.
- 77 ANT, *Portrait of Andrews*, c. 1922.
- 78, 79, 80. ANT, from *Arabian Nights*, 1928-30, RBS.
- 81 Pahari, *Agata Patika*, IM.
- 82 to 85. ANT, from *Arabian Nights*, RBS.
- 86, 87, 88. ANT, *Masks*, charcoal, 1930-40, RBS.
- 89 (Japanese), *Bugaku mask*, painted wood, 12th cent. (compare no. 88 with no. 89).
- 90, 91. ANT, *Masks*, 1930-40, RBS, no. 90 in charcoal.
- 92 ANT, painting based on *Kutum Katum* motif (no. 93) dated 1942, NGMA.
- 94 ANT, *Vulture*, c. 1938, RBS.
- 95 (Mughal), Mansur, *A Turkey cock*, 1622.
- 96 ANT, *Bird*, S/d, May 18, 1938, RBS.
- 97 ANT, from *Krishna Mangal*, 1938, RBS.
- 98 ANT, from *Kavikankan Chandi*, 1838, RBS.
- 99 ANT, from *Krishna Mangal*, RBS.
- 100, 102. ANT, from *Hittopadesha*, 1938, RBS.
- 101 ANT, *Death of the Poet* (one of the two versions), 1942, RBS.
- 103 ANT, from *Krishna Mangal*, 1938, RBS.





- 104 ANT, from *Kavikankan Chandi*, 1938, RBS.
- 105 Nandalal Bose, *Spring Festival*, 1949.
- 106 B. B. Mukherji, *In the Garden*, NGMA.
- 107 ANT, *Parody on Cubism*, c. 1938.
- 108 GT, *Puri Seascape*, water colour, post card sent by the painter to his daughter from Puri, date stamp of 1907, coll : Dwarik Chatterji, Calcutta.
- 109 GT, Jyotirindranath, ink, from Jeevansmriti, 1911.
- 110 Jyotirindranath, *pencil portrait of Abanindranath*, dated 1897. (examples like this may have served as influence for no. 111).
- 111 GT, *Pencil Portrait*, c. 1907, RBS.
- 112 GT, *Jagdish Mama*, brush and ink, S/d March 1907, RBS.
- 113 GT, *A. Coomaraswamy*, brush and ink, S/d, Sept. 1909, RBS.
- 114 GT, probably also *Jagdish Mama*, brush and ink, S/d, Jan. 1911.
- 115 GT, *Sibu Kirtanya* (?), pencil, c. 1907, RBS.
- 116, 117. GT, *Crows*, ink, published in 1911, RBS.
- 118 GT, another version of the *Banyan Tree* which stood in the Jorsanko courtyard and is slightly different than the one published in Jeevansmriti, ink, RBS.
- 119 (Japanese), Hasekuwa Tohaku (1539-1610), *Pine wood*, detail of a screen painting, ink on paper. (An example of Japanese Sumi-e as a possible source for ink work in nos. 116, 117 and 118).
- 120 GT, similar brush work as in no. 121, RBS.
- 121 An example of Japanese TSUKETATE use of ink.
- 122 GT, *Head of a man*, BKB, (use of Nail-head and Rat-tail line—TEI TOU SOBI BYOU, as in no. 123).
- 123 (Japanese) Toba Sojo (12th century), *Animal caricatures, Monkey pursued by hare and frog*.
- 124 GT, *Moonlight*, use of Japanese brush work in the leaves, from Jeevansmriti.
- 125 GT, *On the banks of Ganges*, water colour, c. 1912, coll. Dwarik Chatterji.
- 126 GT, *Calcutta roof tops*, a fine pencil drawing for no. 127 showing the artist's understanding of linear perspective. RBS.
- 127 GT, ink, c. 1912, RBS.
- 128 GT, *The Boat 'Padma'*, water colour. RBS.
- 129 GT, *At the Verandah*, ink.
- 130 GT, *Calcutta during rains*, all the above three from Jeevansmriti.
- 131 Whistler, *Nocturne in Blue and Green*, c. 1877. (compare nos. 128 and 131).
- 132 GT, *Calcutta Street*, ink, another version published in Jeevansmriti, (the brush work is not Japanese but impressionistic which suggests GT used both the types side by side).
- 133 GT, *Landscape*, water colour, c. 1915, BKB. (the treatment of space and trees is similar to that in no. 134).
- 134 (Japanese), Sesshu (1420-1506). *Landscape of Ama-no-Hashidate*, detail of a scroll (1502-1506).



- 135 GT, *Landscape on gold paper*, folded in the middle in emulation of Japanese folded screens, c. 1915, BKB.
- 136 (Japanese) Ogata Korin (1658-1716), *Chrysanthemums by a stream*, with gold background.
- 137 GT, satirical caricature, *Hairdressing in Bengal*, c. 1917. (arrangement probably based on a Japanese print, 'Classical Hair styles of Japan', reproduced in Modern Review, Dec. 1916.
- 138 GT, a pencil study for 139, RBS.
- 139 GT, *Chaitanya in ecstasy at the feet of Vishnu's altar*, water colour, before 1914.
- 140 Maurice Denis, *April*, 1892, (an example of French Art Nouveau, compare with no. 139).
- 141 GT, *Mother and Child*, ink on gold paper, c. 1912. (a number of GT's paintings in ink and water colour have been done on gold paper).
- 142 GT, *Chaitanya's Guru showing him the impress of Vishnu's feet*, ink c. 1912, RBS.
- 143, 144. GT, *Chaitanya Preaching*, two versions, water colour, before 1914, RBS.
- 145 GT, *Chaitanya at his Guru's door*, water colour, before 1914, Academy of Fine Arts, Calcutta.
- 146 (Japanese), Koriusai, (18th century) *Snow scene at Mikasayama*, wood-block print. (GT's compositions with diagonally placed motifs like the walls are similar to those in Japanese prints).
- 147 GT, *Chaitanya's last farewell to his mother*, ink, before 1914, RBS.
- 148 to 151. GT, *Pilgrims at the temple door*, c. 1915. Four versions of the same theme and composition. With exception of 148, all are in ink. No. 148 (one of the finest pencil drawings of GT) and no. 151 in RBS, nos. 149 and 150 in the collection of Smt. Uma Devi, Calcutta.
- 152, 153, 155. GT, *Pilgrims*, c. 1915. No. 153 done with tea water, the other two in ink, RBS.
- 154 (Japanese) Sesshu Toya, *Landscape in cursive style*, (1495) Hanging scroll. (another possible source for GT's use of SUMI-E).
- 156 GT, one of the several in black ink on similar paper of same size c. 1915, coll : Smt. Uma Devi.
- 157 GT, water colour, c. 1915.
- 158 GT, *Portrait of W. Pearson*, water colour, reproduced in V.B.Q. 1924.
- 159 GT, water colour, S/d, 1/1/23. RBS. (nos. 156, 157 and 159 are from a series called *Pilgrims*).
- 160 GT, *Himalayas from Darjeeling*, water colour, 1916/1920, RBS. An earlier landscape with waterfall motif was published in Jeevansmriti. (compare no. 160 with no. 161 for the motif of waterfall).
- 161 (Japanese), *The Waterfall of Nachi*, Kose school.
- 162 GT, *Himalayan Landscape*, ink, 1916/1920, BKB.
- 163 (Japanese), Sansetsu (1589-1651), *Rain*, (compare with no. 162). Nos. 161 and 163 are from Lawrence Binyon, *Painting in the Far East*, second edition, 1913. No.





- 161 also appeared in KOKKA, the well known Japanese art magazine of the time founded in 1889, which would have been known to the Tagores.
- 164, 165. GT, *Himalayan Landscapes*, ink, 1916/1920. RBS. In the mountain peaks can be read the profile face of Mahadeva looking upward.
- 166 GT, *Temple at Night*, water colour, c. 1915, Academy of Fine Arts.
- 167 GT, *Pratima Visarjan (The Procession)*, water colour, c. 1920, RBS.
- 168 GT, *Pratima Visarjan (The Immersion)*, detail, water colour, c. 1920, BKB.
- 169 Whistler, *Old Battersea Bridge, Nocturne in Blue and Gold*, 1877, (compare with GT for night effects).
- 170 GT, water colour, 1920/25, coll : Kasturbhai Lalbhai, Ahmedabad.
- 171 Larianov, *Portrait of V. Tatlin*, 1913-14.
- 172 GT, *Reverie*, published RUPAM, 1922 (compare the cubist elements in Larianov with those in GT).
- 173 GT, also published as above.
- 174 GT, ink, 1920/25, coll : Kasturbhai Lalbhai.
- 175 J. Balla, *Speeding Automobile*, 1912.
- 176 Wyndham Lewis, illustration to Shakespeare's *Timon of Athens*, 1913/14. (compare in terms of dynamic diagonal structure).
- 177 GT, Drawing for caricature, from which such drawings were transferred on lithographic stone. 1916/1920, RBS.
- 178 L. Feininger, *Die Morgen-Zeitung*, caricature, 1915. (Nos. 177 and 178 are so close a question arises whether GT was acquainted with Feininger's work.)
- 179 GT, *Tagore at the Congress session*, water colour, c. 1917. Santiniketan. A second version is also in Santiniketan in narrow format and freer brush work.
- 180 GT, Drawing for caricature, c. 1917. RBS.
- 181 GT, *Sir J. C. Bose demonstrating his apparatus*, ink, S/d, 1925, coll : Bose Institute, Calcutta. (Each of the above two uses light projected like a beam, compare with no. 182).
- 182 Georges de La Tour, *Magdalen with the Lamp*, c. 1930, Louvre.
- 183, 184. GT, two versions of *Swarnapuri, Dwarka*, water colour, c. 1925, RBS.
- 185 Boccioni, *Charge of the Lancers*, 1915. (compare with it nos. 183 and 184, for the use of diagonal compositional units).
- 186 GT, water colour, 1920-25, RBS.
- 187 GT, ink, c. 1925, RBS.
- 188 Picasso, *The Reservoir at Horts de Ebro*, 1909.
- 189 L. Feininger, *Leuchtbake I*, 1913. The comparison reveals that GT does not analyse volume to relate it with space as in Picasso, but like Feininger GT is interested in relating light and space.
- 190 GT, *House Mysterious* (one of a series), ink, c. 1922-25. Santiniketan, Another version is in Kasturbhai Lalbhai coll : without the righthand door.

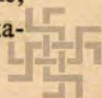


- 191 Vladimir Tatlin, *Hall in the Castle*, design for a back cloth for 'Emperor Maximillian and his son Adolf', 1911.
- 192 GT, Scenographic sketch, (with inscribed notes), ink, c. 1925, RBS.  
The only known sketch for a stage set by GT which shows the closeness to its Russian parallel. No. 190 is one of the several paintings planned on similar basis.
- 193 GT, *House Mysterious*, ink, c. 1922-25, another version of the series published in M.R. 1926.
- 194 GT, water colour, c. 1925, RBS. It is either based on or conceived for a stage setting.
- 195 Constructivist setting by Alexander Exter for Calderon's 'La Dama Duende'.  
One of the first attempts by Russians to incorporate cubist and constructivist elements in stage design which might have been known to GT.
- 196 Gordon Craig, design for Ibsen's 'The Pretenders', c. 1910. The similarity between GT's no. 192 with the above is obvious.
- 197 GT, *The Princess*, water colour on gold paper, dated 1925.
- 198 'Princess Turandot' as presented by the Third Studio of the Moscow Art Theatre. (photograph)
- 199 Leon Bakst, *L'Après-midi d'un Faune*, settings and costume, 1912 production of Sergei Diaghilev.
- 200 A scene from Dak Ghar, 1916. Could the settings have been done by GT as has been mentioned by O. C. Ganguly?
- 201 GT, *Dreamland*, water colour c. 1925, RBS.
- 202 N. Goncharova, sets for L'Oiseau de Feu.
- 203 GT, Book cover for Rabindranath's play 'Rakta Karbi', 1925. Its criss cross planes resemble those in the Rayonist painting no. 204.
- 204 N. Goncharova, *Cats*, 1911-12.
- 205 GT, *Satbai Champa*, water colour, dated 1924, Academy of Fine Arts, Calcutta.
- 206 Braque, *Still life with violin and pitcher*, 1909-10. The comparison with Braque further shows that although GT used the cubist compositional structure he was primarily concerned not with volume but light and space. While Braque's colours are browns and greys GT used colour orchestration of modified hues.
- 207, 208. GT, *Cubistic studies in ink*. c. 1925. Kasturbhai Lalbhai.
- 209 GT, another version of *Satbai Champa*, water colours, RBS.
- 210, 211. Delauney, *Eiffel Tower*, 1910. Note the closeness with Delauney in terms of structure and colour orchestration. The lower half in each is worked out in a similar way.
- 212, 213. GT, *Prismatic colour studies*, water colour, c. 1925, RBS.
- 214 Larianov, *Sea Beach*, 1913-14. Notice GT's closeness with Rayonism.
- 215 GT, *Himalayan Music*, c. 1925.
- 216 A. Rothchenko, *The Dancer*, 1914, (detail). Compare it with the lower half of no. 215.
- 217 Franz Marc, *The Tower of Blue Horses* (detail), 1913.





- 218, 219. GT, Two versions of *Alladin* (there are at least three), water colour, 1924. No. 219 in Academy of Fine Arts, Calcutta.
- 220 GT, *Flight of the Soul*, (there are other versions also), ink, c. 1925-30, RBS.
- 221 Feininger, *Barfusserkirche in Erfurt*, 1924. The comparison establishes further closeness between GT and Feininger.
- 222, 223. GT, two versions of the same theme. ink, c. 1925, no. 222 in IM, no. 223 in RBS.
- 224 GT, *The Princess*, black and white version of no. 197, c. 1925.
- 225 GT, ink, c. 1925, IM.
- 226 GT, water colour, c. 1920-25, BKB.
- 227 GT, ink, c. 1920-25, RBS.
- 228 GT, ink, c. 1920-25, Kasturbhai Lalbhai.
- 229 GT, ink, c. 1920-25, BKB. All seem variations on the same theme beginning with no. 227 followed by no. 226, 228 and 229. No. 227 is comparatively naturalistic which gets gradually transformed into personal phantasy in the other versions, with which could also be linked nos. 230 and 231.
- 230, 231. GT, ink, c. 1925-29, RBS. (probably late works).
- “When of a sudden death came, and in a moment made a gaping rent in its smooth seeming fabric, I was utterly bewildered.....the terrible darkness which was disclosed to me through this rent, continued to attract me night and day as time went on. I would ever and anon return to take my stand there and gaze upon it, wondering what there was left in place of what had gone. Emptiness is a thing man cannot bring himself to believe in; that which is not, is untrue; that which is untrue is not. So our efforts to find something, where we see nothing, are unceasing.” Rabindranath Tagore in ‘Jeevansmriti’.
- 232 Entrance to the Tiger Cave, Udaigiri Hill, Orissa.
- 233 GT, ink, c. 1925-29, BKB.
- 234 Giovanni di Paolo, *Madonna Misericordia* (or of Mercy), 1437.
- 235 (Egyptian), *The Sky Goddess Nut*, c. 1000 B.C. Papyrus.
- 236 GT, ink, 1925-29, BKB.
- 237 GT, ink 1925-29, RBS. Nos. 233 and 237 could be taken as GT's image of the mother archetype which has iconographic parallels (protective aspect) in nos. 234 and 235.
- 238, 239. GT, *Devi* (?), (two versions), ink, c. 1925-29, BKB.
- 240 *Bhawani, Trimurti, Mother*, 19th century.
- 241 *Kali, the devourer*, copper, Northern India, 17th century.
- 242 GT, *Devi* (?), ink, c. 1925-29, RBS. Nos. 238 and 239, two versions of the same, could be interpreted as the protector and the devourer at the same time, by juxtaposing with traditional iconography as in nos. 240 and 241.
- 243 Jan Toorop, *The Sphinx and Psyche*, 1899.





- 244 GT, ink, c. 1925-29, BKB. GT's has the fin de siècle 'femme fatal' look but not its cruelty.
- 245 GT, ink, c. 1925-29, BKB.
- 246 (Japanese), Shuncho, *The Courtesan Hanogi*, wood block print, 18th century. Occasionally GT's women have coquettishness like those of Japanese courtesans.
- 247 GT, ink, c. 1925-29, RBS.
- 248 Rossetti, *Beata Beatrix*.
- 249 GT, ink, c. 1925-29, RBS.
- 250 Leonardo da Vinci, *Mona Lisa*, Louvre. The comparison shows how in GT also, like in the western counterparts, the meaning of the image is presented through visual pictorial terms.
- 251, 252, 253, 254. GT, ink, c. 1925-29, last three in RBS.
- 255 GT, ink, c. 1925-29, BKB.
- 256 GT, water colour, c. 1925.
- 257 Moritz von Schwind, (German, 19th century), *Erlkonig*. The comparison with no. 257 suggests that no. 255 could be interpreted as spectre of death.
- 258 GT, ink, c. 1925-29, NGMA.
- 259 GT, ink, c. 1925-29, RBS.
- 260 GT, ink, supposed to be the last brush strokes by the painter in 1929-30, RBS.
- 261 Signatures of Rabindranath. For a note on RNT's signatures see page 113.
- 262 Manuscript page in his own handwriting of one of his essays on his paintings.
- 263, 264. These two sets of RNT's paintings were reproduced in RUPAM, 1930, indicating that they were definitely done before mid-1930. Some are even earlier. This also establishes that geometric stylization is simultaneous to the curvilinear.
- 265 Photo taken in Gallery Pigalle, Paris, 1930, on the occasion of the exhibition of RNT's paintings. The Argentinian, Victoria Ocampo, who was responsible in arranging it, is on the left of RNT. Two of the paintings hanging on the walls I have been able to trace, which we positively know were included in the exhibition. (nos. 266, 267) Both these are of large size and again the presence of geometric style during the early phase be noted. It is presumed that paintings reproduced in nos. 263 and 264 were also included in this exhibition.
- 268 Drawings illustrating the article "Automatic Drawing", *Modern Review*, Jan. 1917.
- 269 Front page of the book of which there is evidence that it was owned by RNT. It was probably one of the sources for his acquaintance of 'Primitive' art. Nos. 273, 279, 280, 292, 295, 307, 319, 341, have been taken from the above book.
- 270, 271. RNT, Erasures from 'Purabi', ink, 1924. The entire manuscript of 'Purabi' is in Rabindra Sadan, Santiniketan, all paintings of RNT reproduced here belong to Santiniketan unless otherwise mentioned.
- 272 RNT, An earlier doodle in decorative stylization. S/d, 22nd Ashwin 1312 = 1905. Between this and nos. 270, 271, it is presumed that acquaintance with primitive art took place which might explain the closeness between nos. 270 and 273.



- 273 Fish-headed idols from Easter Island.
- 274 RNT, from Purabi.
- 275 RNT, colour, c. 1930.
- 276 Patterns on a Tilingit ( North American ) Box; compare with nos. 274 and 275.
- 277 RNT, Doodle from ' Rakta Karbi ', colour, c. 1923. Note the kinship with no. 279.
- 278 RNT, colour, S/d, 29-10-34. Note the similarity in the use of concentric spirals as in no. 280.
- 279 Tobacco Pipes from British Columbia and New Zealand.
- 280 Idol from New Zealand.
- 281, 282. RNT, ink, c. 1928-29. Among first paintings with blank background.
- 283 RNT, One of the first in colour based on his own signature form, c. 1929.
- 284 RNT, *Bird*, colour, c. 1930.
- 285 RNT, From Purabi. ( Tracing by the present author ).
- 286 Tilingit Bird Motif ( North America ).
- 287 RNT, ink, dated Chaitra 1336 = 1929 A.D. there are a series of them on the letter pad paper of the ships in which he travelled abroad. Many of these are in NGMA, including no. 290.
- 288 Tilingit Painted Eagle. Notice the similarity in the beaky bird images.
- 289 RNT, colour, c. 1929.
- 290 RNT, ink, dated with pencil ?/?/29.
- 291 RNT, colour, c. 1929.
- 292 American Indian articles from the Northwest.
- 293 RNT, ink, c. 1928.
- 294 RNT, colour, c. 1930. Note the similarity with the patterns on Peruvian painted vases below.
- 295 Peruvian painted pottery.
- 296, 298. RNT, ink, c. 1929.
- 297 Paracas, South Peru, Single candour figure of Manto, 200-600 A.D.
- 299 RNT, colour, c. 1930.
- 300 Peru, Embroidered fabric ( Manto ).
- 301, 302, 304. RNT, colour, c. 1930. No. 304 was exhibited in 1930.
- 303 Haida painting representing a sea-monster in the form of a wolf.
- 305 Paracas, South Peru, Motif from a Manto.
- 306 RNT, Head, colour, c. 1930.
- 307 Masks from New Ireland.
- 308 Dance Mask. Face with an eagle's beak, Kwakiutal, ( North America ).
- 309 RNT, coloured inks and crayon, after 1930.
- 310 RNT, colour, c. 1930.
- 311 North Peruvian coast, Handle in the form of a god, of a sacrificial knife, c. 12th century.
- 312 RNT, colour, c. 1929.



- 313 Peru, Clay bottle in the shape of a trophy head. Observe the similarities between the two pairs.
- 314 RNT, coloured crayon, S/d, 1939.
- 315 RNT, colour, S/d, 21-1-34.
- 316 RNT, from 'Shey', 1935. 'Shey' is a collection of stories for children with line illustrations by RNT.
- 317 Mask from the island of New Hannover, Melanesia, Painted in red, white and black.
- 318 RNT, Head, Sepia ink, S/d, 17-1-34.
- 319 Polynesian weapons and costume. Note the resemblance between the head in the left hand corner and that by RNT, no. 318.
- 320 RNT, colour, c. 1929.
- 321 RNT, ink, c. 1929.
- 322 RNT, colour, c. 1930.
- 323 Spirit figure, Congo (Africa). No. 322 is obviously based on some African carving.
- 324 RNT, ink, S/d, Moscow, September, 1930. The composition of three heads in their placing and physiognomy reminds of Leonardo da Vinci's famous drawing, *Five Grotesque Heads*, c. 1400, Windsor Castle. This painting also relates to RNT's set of two-headed paintings, nos. 375 to 378.
- 325 RNT, page from Purabi, (Tracing from the original by the present author).
- 326 RNT, ink, c. 1929-30.
- 327 Heads drawn by girls between 3 to 8 years in age.
- 328, 329. RNT, Two states of an etching, c. 1932.
- 330 RNT, ink, S/d, 20-7-39.
- 331 RNT, ink, S/d, 9th Chaitra 1335 = early 1929.
- 332 RNT, colour, after 1930.
- 333 RNT, coloured pencil and ink, S/d, 1934.
- 334 RNT, colour, S/d, 20-11-34.
- 335 RNT, ink, c. 1929.
- 336 RNT, colour, c. 1929-30.
- 337 RNT, S/d, March, 1932.
- 338 RNT, colour, S/d, 1-6-33.
- 339 RNT, ink, c. 1930.
- 340 Onondaga wampum-belt made from beads. (State of New York).
- 341 RNT, ink, 1930.
- 342 RNT, ink, S/d, 1938.
- 343 RNT, ink, c. 1929-30.
- 344 RNT, ink, S/d, April 1929, while on board the ship SS Taijo Maru.
- 345 RNT, colour, S/d, 7-11-35.
- 346 RNT, c. 1930, exhibited in 1930.
- 347 RNT, colour, c. 1932.
- 348 RNT, colour, c. 1929.



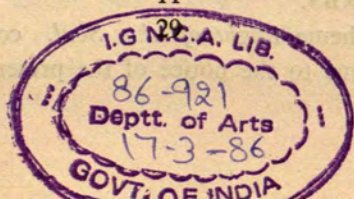


- 349 RNT, first half of 1930, exhibited in 1930.
- 350 RNT, pencil and coloured crayon, after 1930.
- 351 RNT, pencil, S/d, 5-9-40.
- 352 RNT, colour, S/d, 1-9-34.
- 353 RNT, colour, c. 1935.
- 354 Husain, Detail from *Unconcerned*, 1958.
- 355 Amrita Sher-Gil, *Hill Women*, 1935.
- 356 RNT, colour, S/d, 1-10-34.
- 357 RNT, colour, c. 1930.
- 358 Husain, *Three Women in Dupattas*, 1958.
- 359 RNT, colour, S/d, 24-4-36.
- 360 RNT, pencil, S/d, 10th Vaisakh 1343 = early 1937.
- 361 Paul Klee, *Self Portrait*, 1919.
- 362 RNT, sepia ink, S/d, 3rd Ashad 1345 = 1939.
- 363 Emile Nolde, *Prophet*, woodcut, 1912.
- 364 RNT, S/d, Adyar, 25-10-34.
- 365 RNT, S/d, Lahore, 22-2-35.
- 366 RNT, S/d, 15-6-39.
- 367 RNT, c. 1935. All the above four are in pen and ink.
- 368 RNT, pen and ink, 9-1-39.
- 369 RNT, pen and ink, S/d, 24-9-37.
- 370 Emile Nolde, *Christ and the woman taken in adultery*, 1920.
- 371 RNT, colour, c. 1935-39.
- 372 RNT, S/d, 9-11-38.
- 373 RNT, c. 1935-39.
- 374 RNT, S/d, 22-2-39. All the above three probably in Chinese ink.
- 375 RNT, pen and ink, S/d, Moscow, Sep. 15, 1930.
- 376 RNT, ink, c. 1930.
- 377 RNT, colour, c. 1930.
- 378 RNT, colour, after 1930.
- 379 RNT, ink, c. 1929.
- 380 RNT, pen and ink, c. 1932.
- 381 RNT, colour, c. 1935.
- 382 RNT, colour, S/d, 6-11-37.
- 383 RNT, colour, c. 1935-39.
- 384 Emile Nolde, *Landscape*, c. 1925.
- 385, 386. ANT, Proofs of lithographs executed on transfer paper, representing Bengali alphabets transformed into birds. c. 1928, RBS.
- 387 GT, ink, c. 1925. Probably related to the theme *Flight of the Soul*. coll : Mrs. Shrimati Tagore, Calcutta. The last three came to the notice of the present author while the book was in press.



## ERRATA

<i>Page</i>	<i>Line</i>	<i>Incorrect</i>	<i>Correct</i>
16	12	acceptan e	acceptance
16	13	pro ess	process
16	36	beaureaucracy	bureaucracy
24	33	phenomena	phenomenon
25	6	title suggests	titles suggest
29	3	object d'art	objet d'art
35	27	introduci g	introducing
36	7	idiesyncrasies	idiosyncrasies
36	20	continuod	continued
51	20	object d'art	objets d'art
65	39	birtq	birth
79	33	subtely	subtly
82	5	sillouhette	silhouette
83	3	Shahzapur	Shahzadpur
83	7	noctural	nocturnal
83	28	plane	plain
84	22	subtely	subtly
84	35	post anticum	terminus ante quam
85	5	alligned	aligned
99	26	is	was
101	33	Appolinaire	Apollinaire
104	22 & 32	<i>Satbai Champa</i>	<i>Satbhai Champa</i>
104	21 & 23	fig. 8	fig. 9
114	22	a dew drops	a dew-drop
119	21	begin	begins
123	32	vigourous	vigorous
125	21	sources	source
135	18	archestration	orchestration
144	15	Van Gosh	Van Gogh
148	16	on	in
154	6	Rathenstein	Rothenstein
155	8	brandied	bandied
155	40	Marg IXIV	Marg XIV
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162	11	triumpal	triumphal
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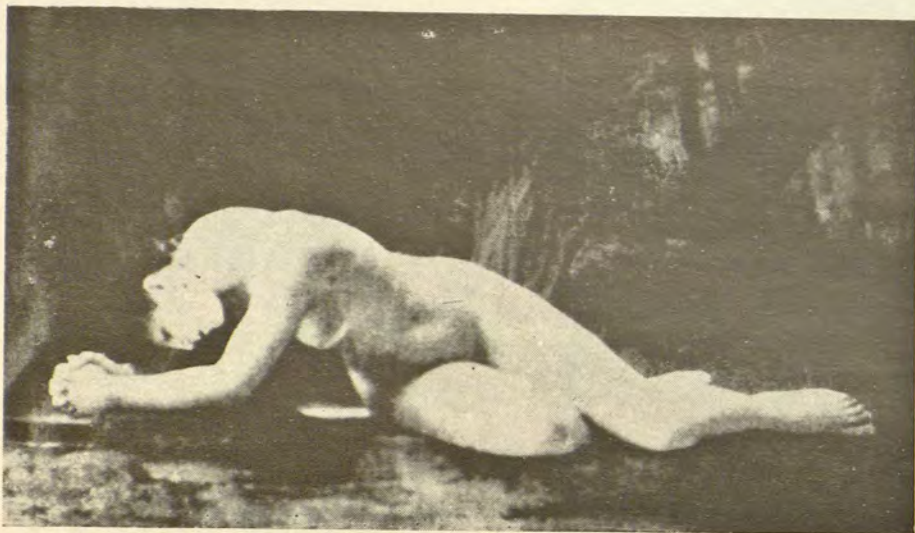


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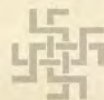
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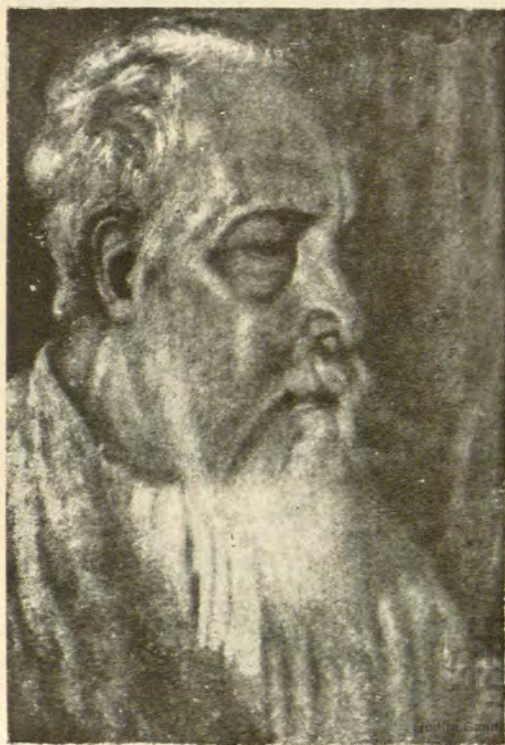
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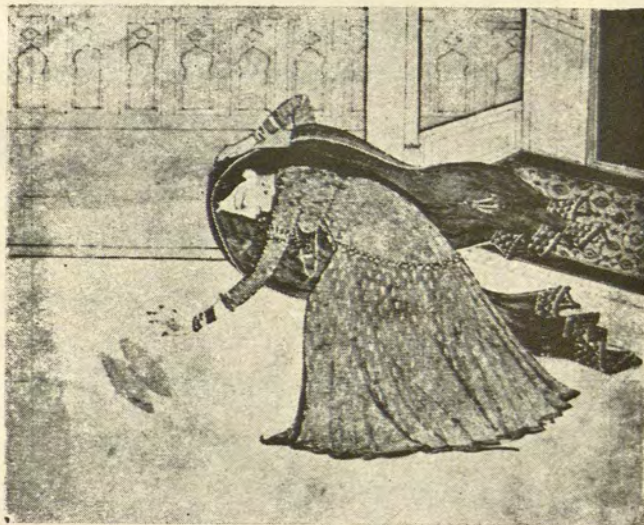
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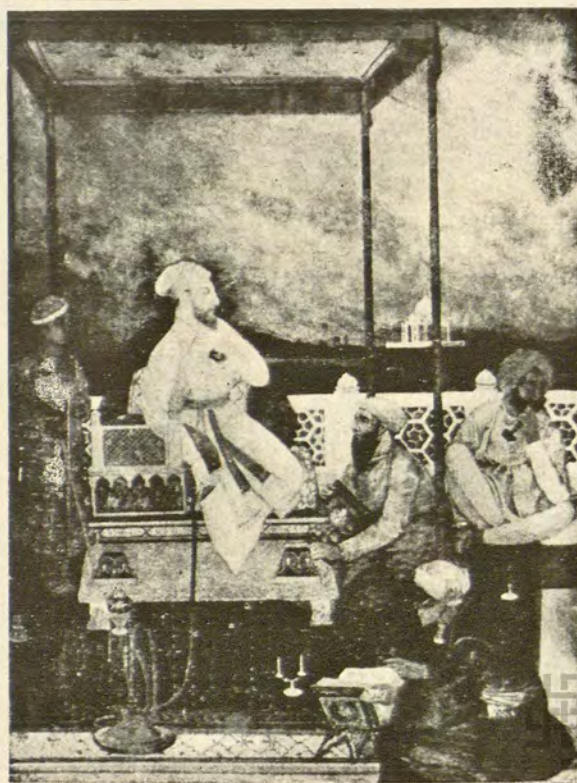






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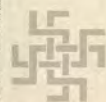
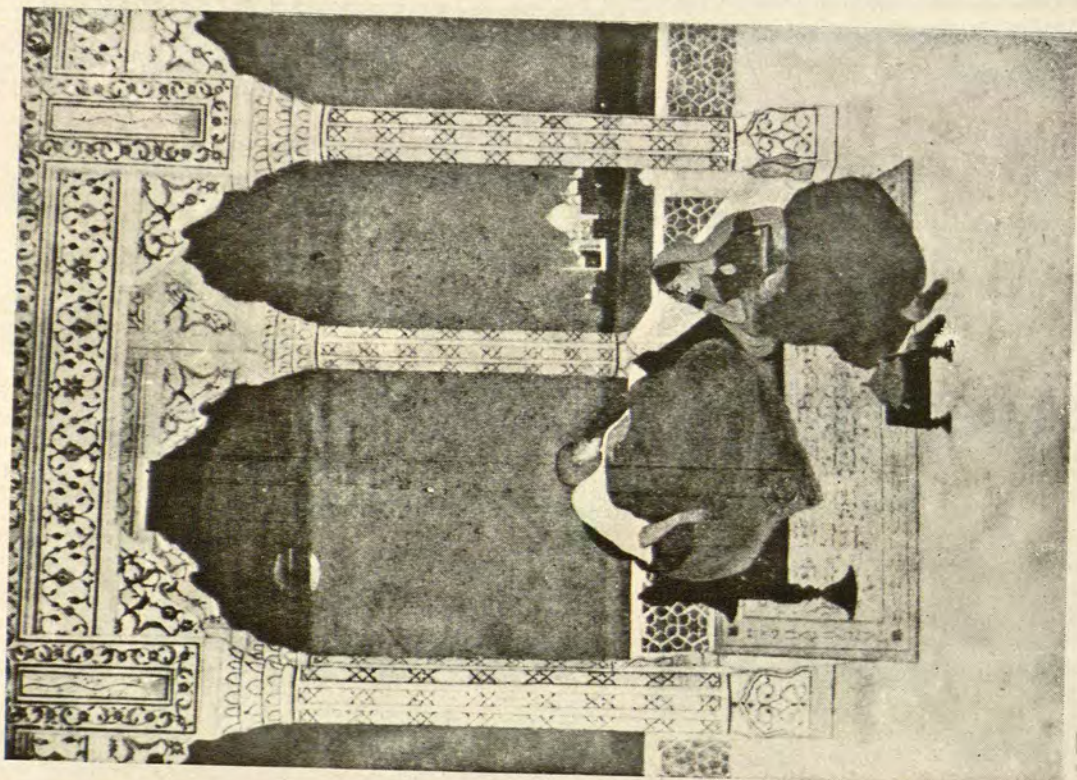






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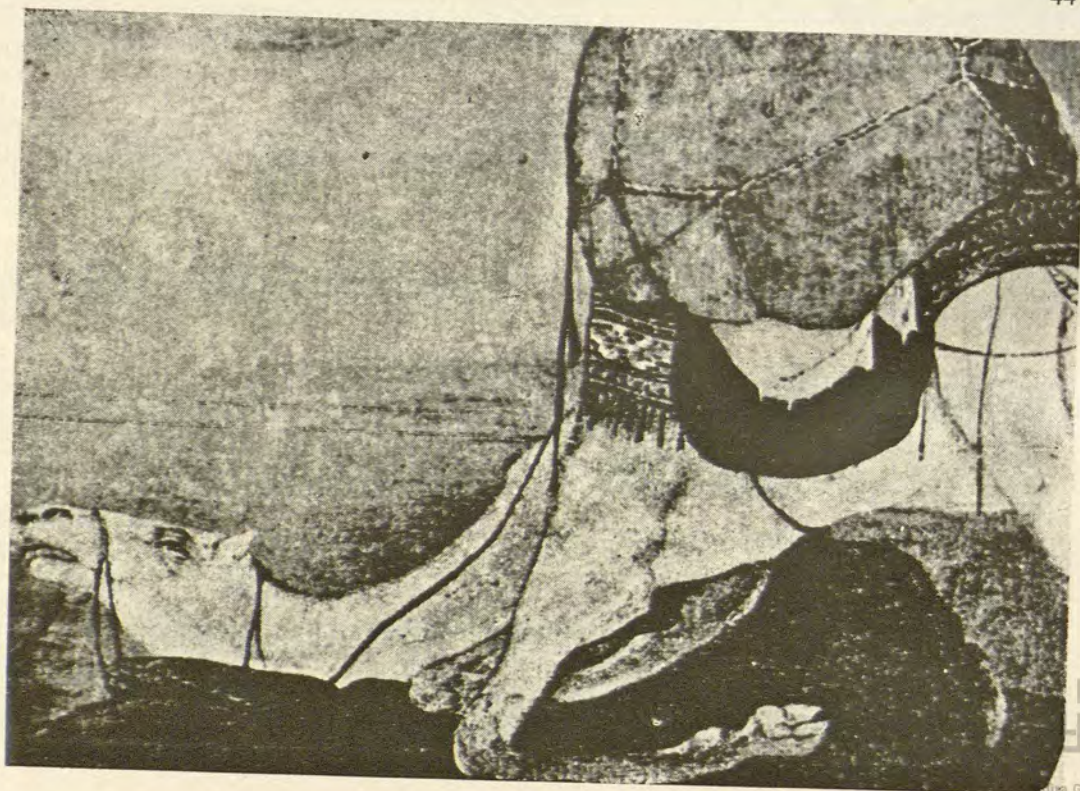






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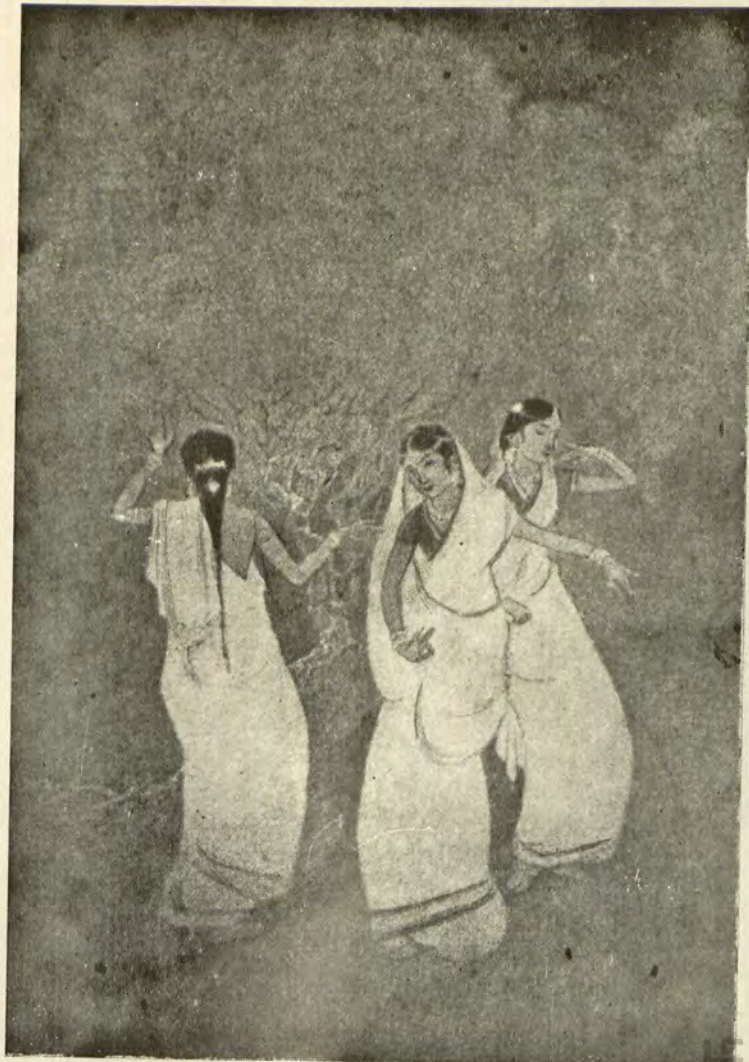
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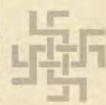


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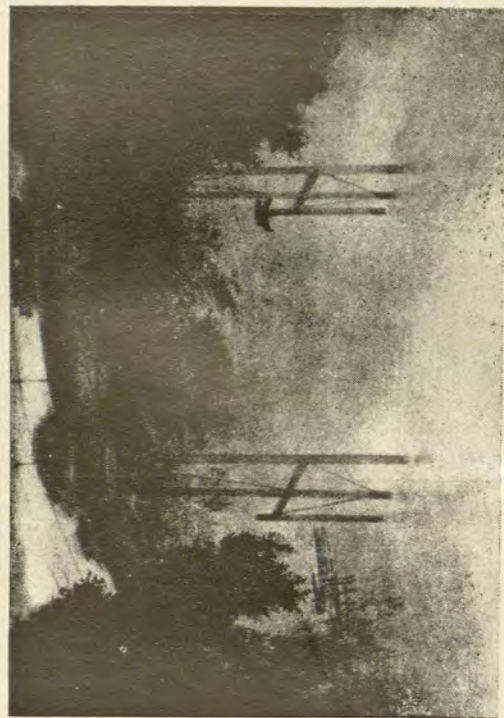
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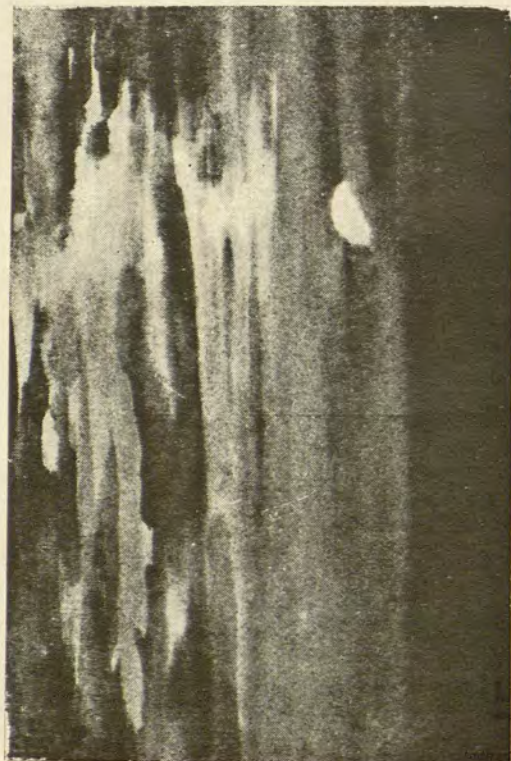
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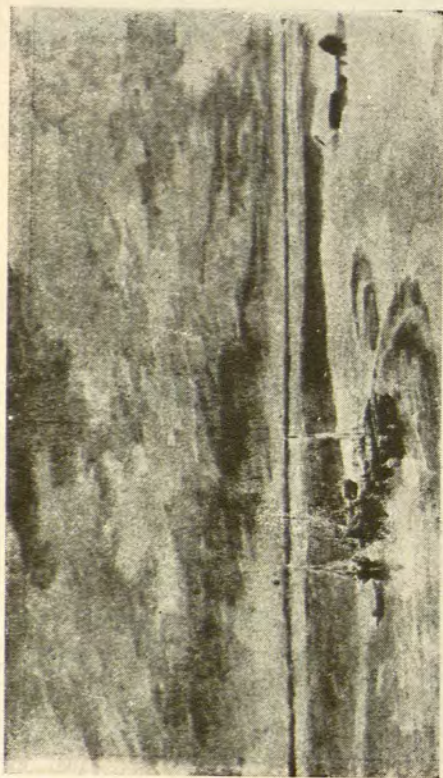
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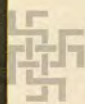
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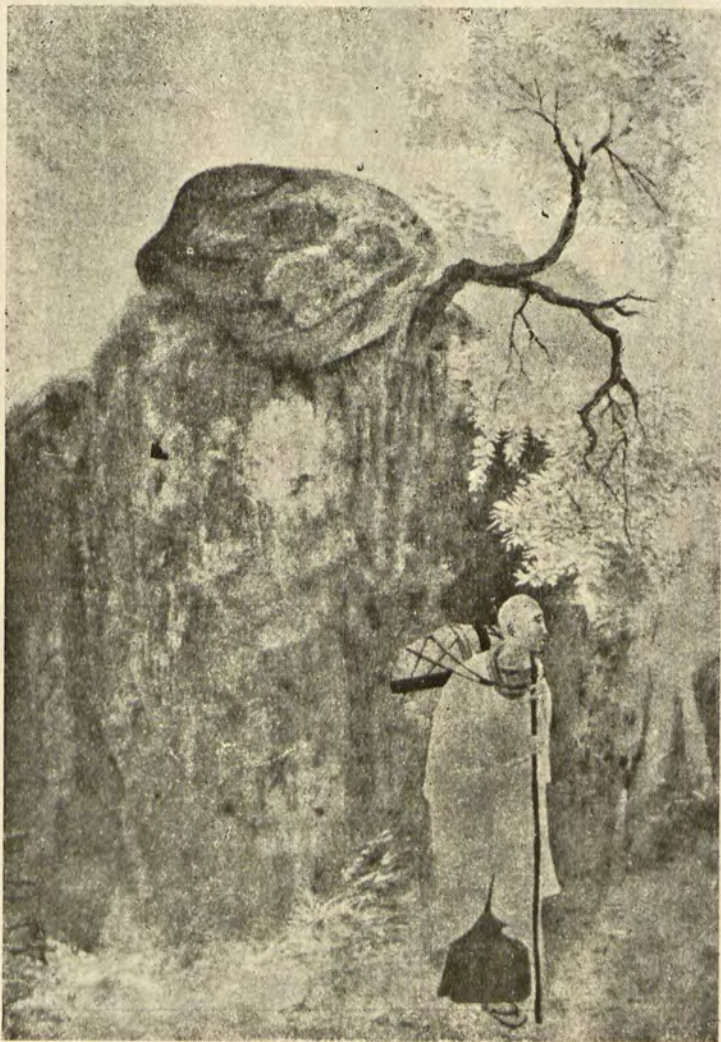
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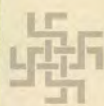


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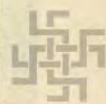


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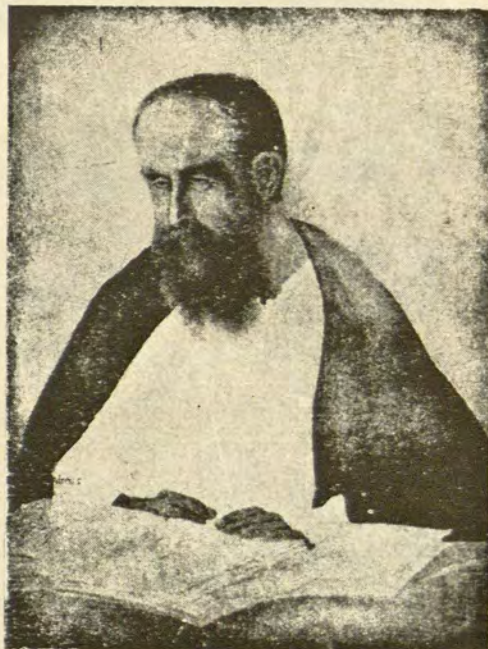


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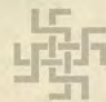




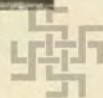
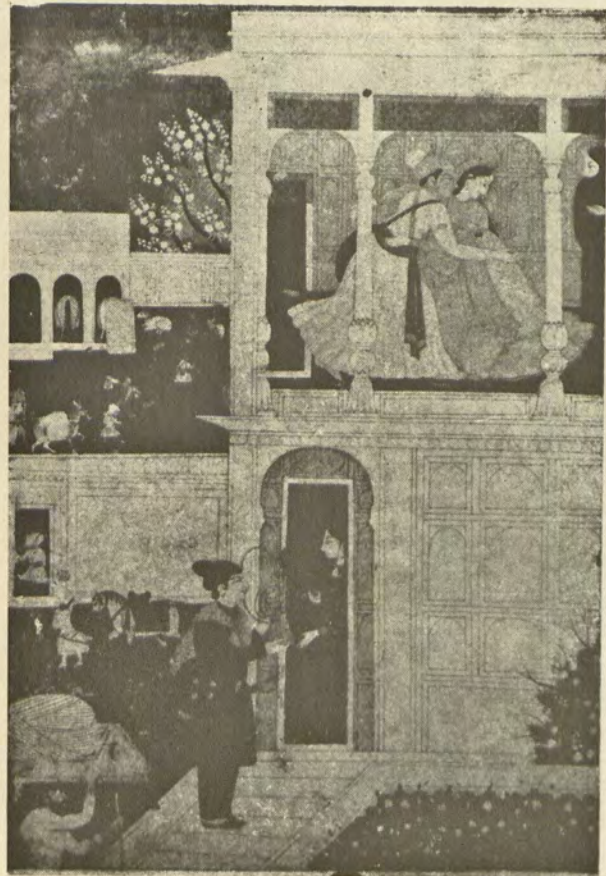
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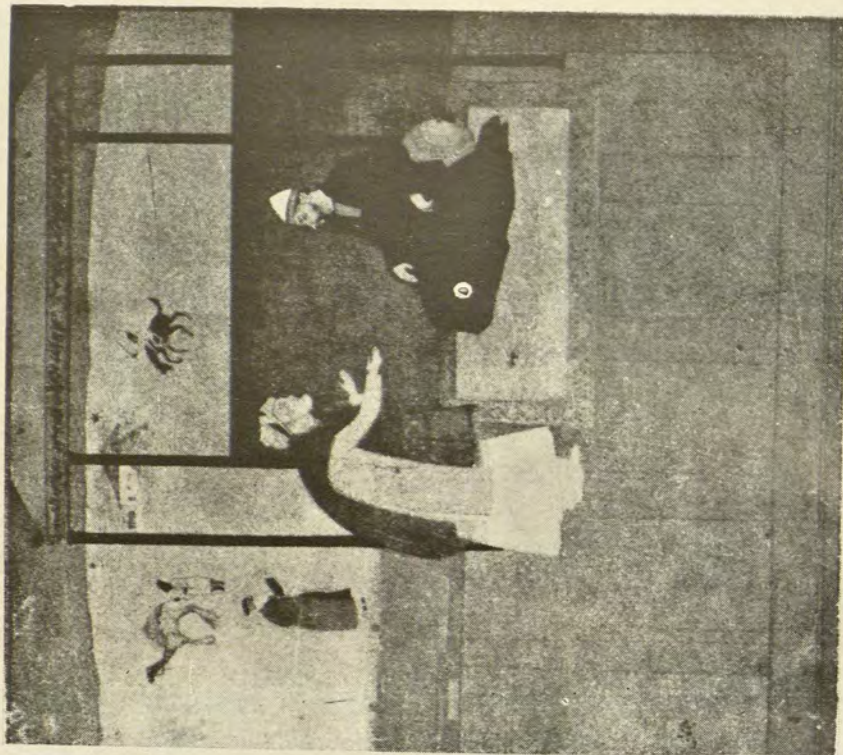
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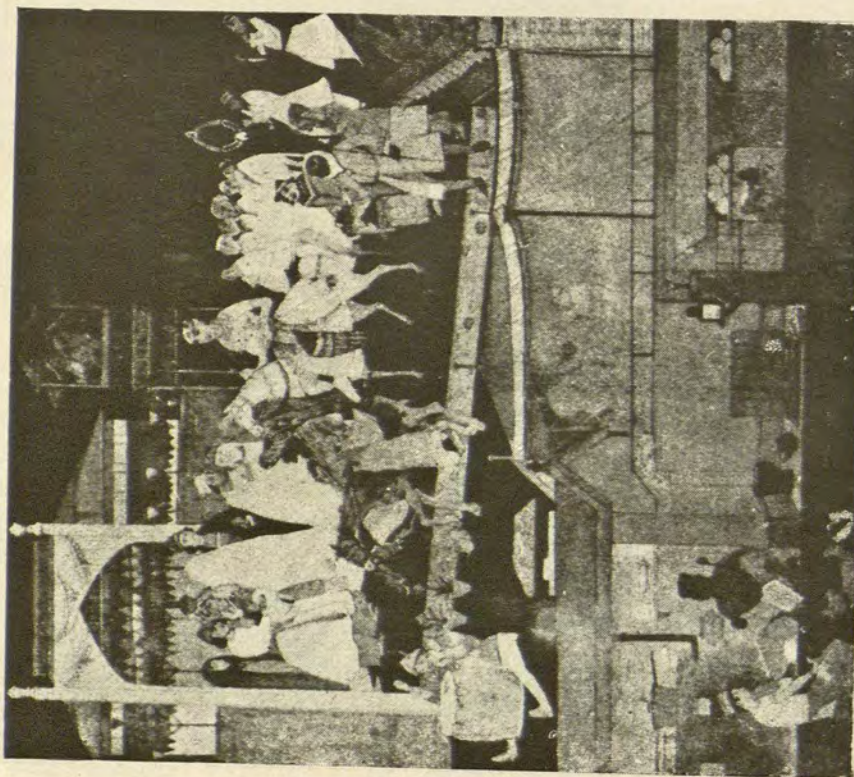








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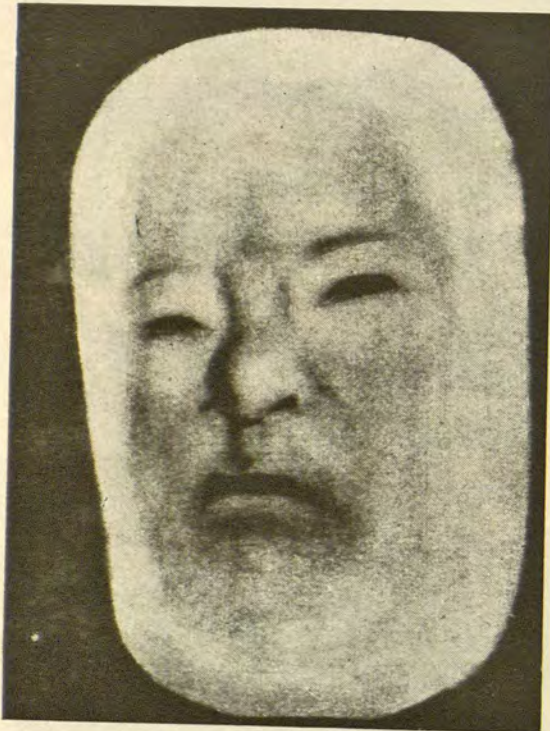


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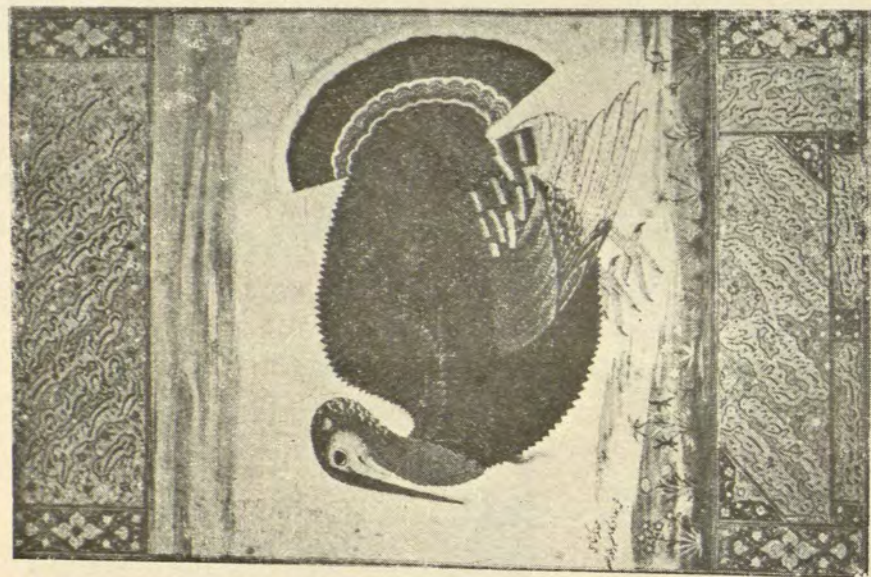
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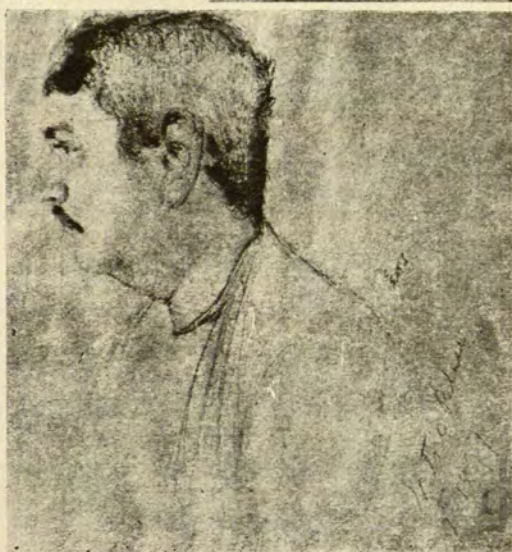
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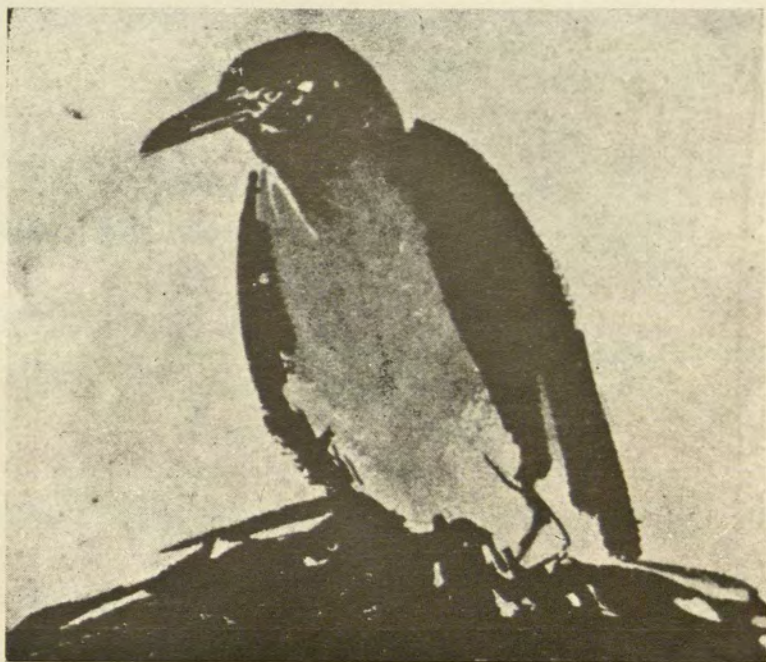
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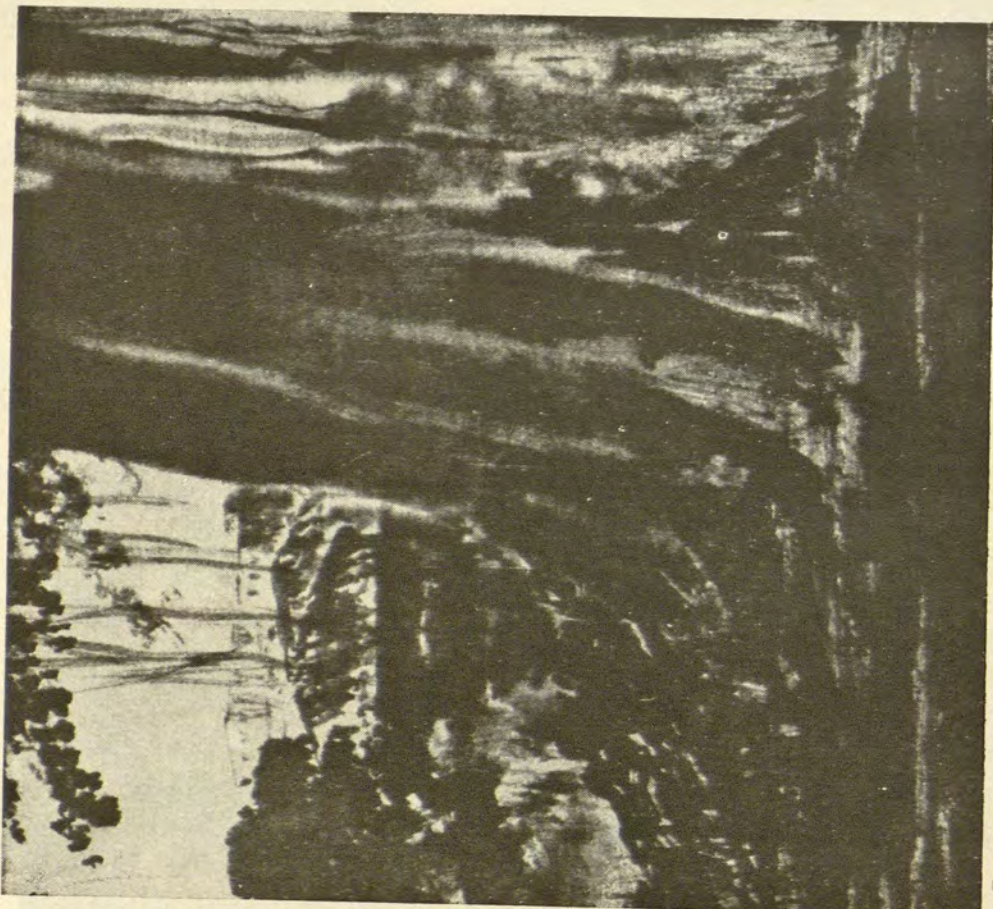


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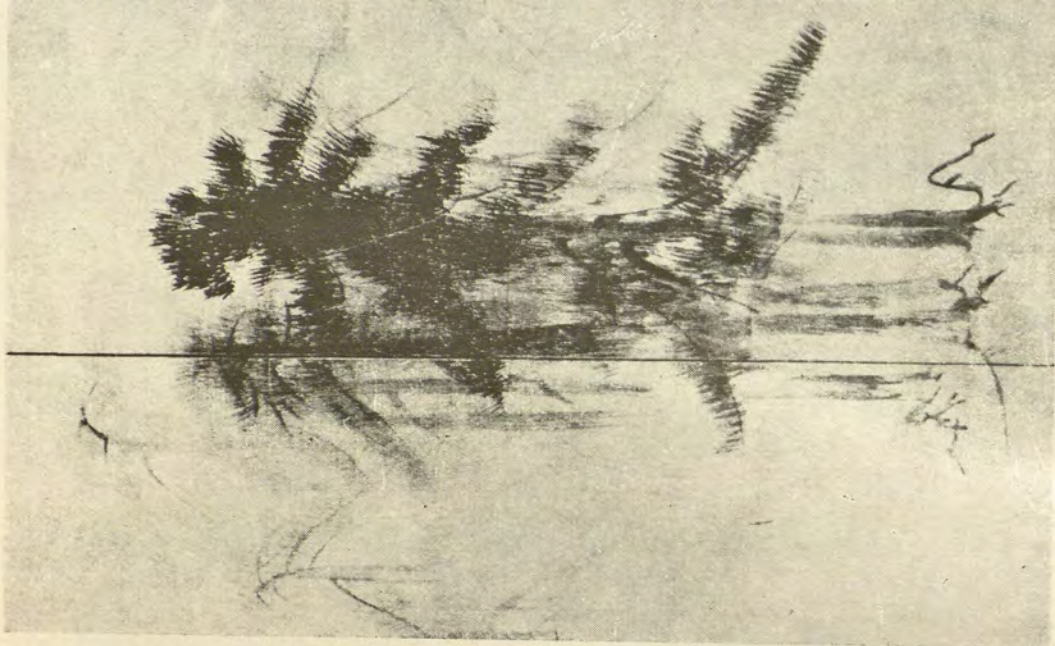




118



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120



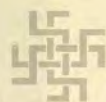
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123



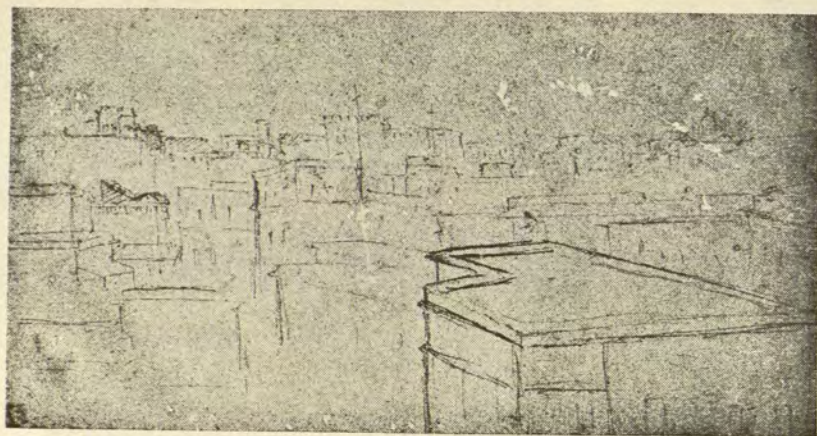




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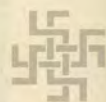
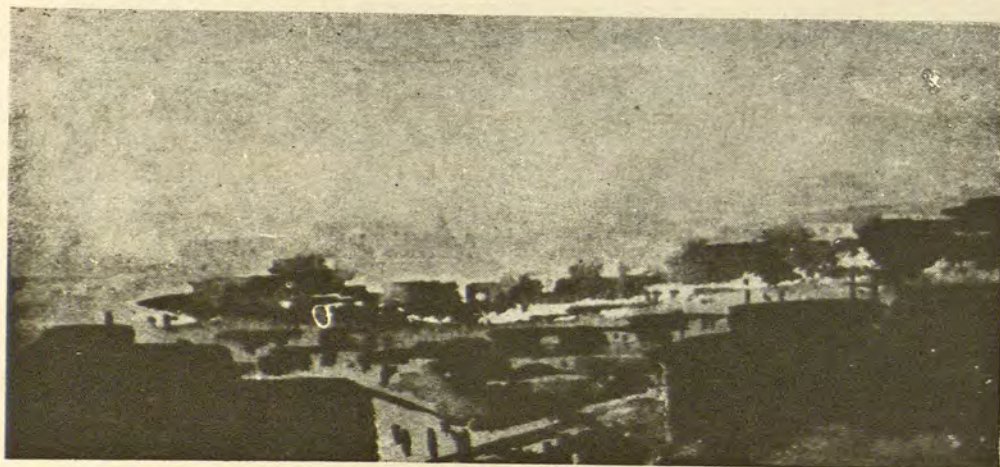


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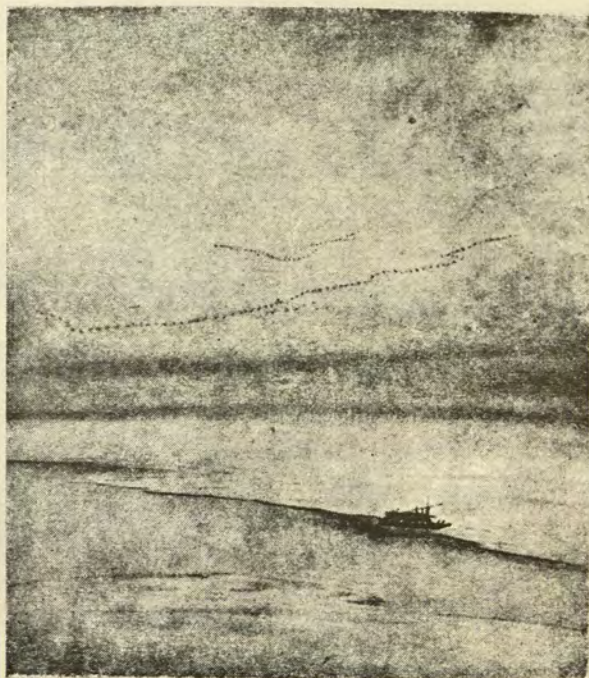


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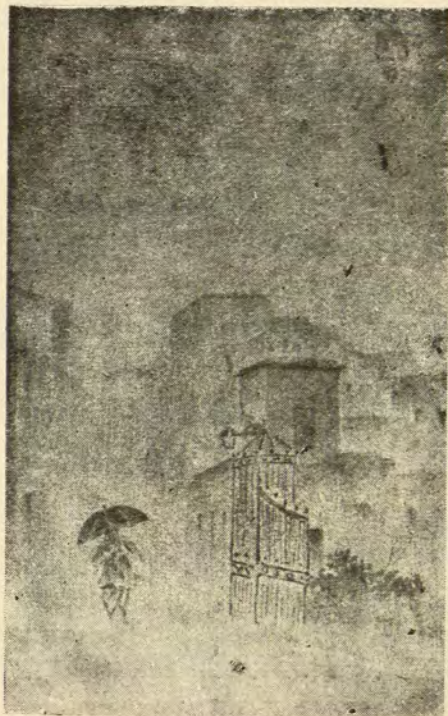


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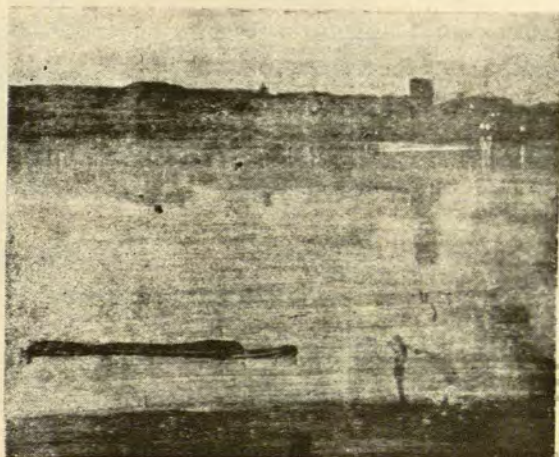


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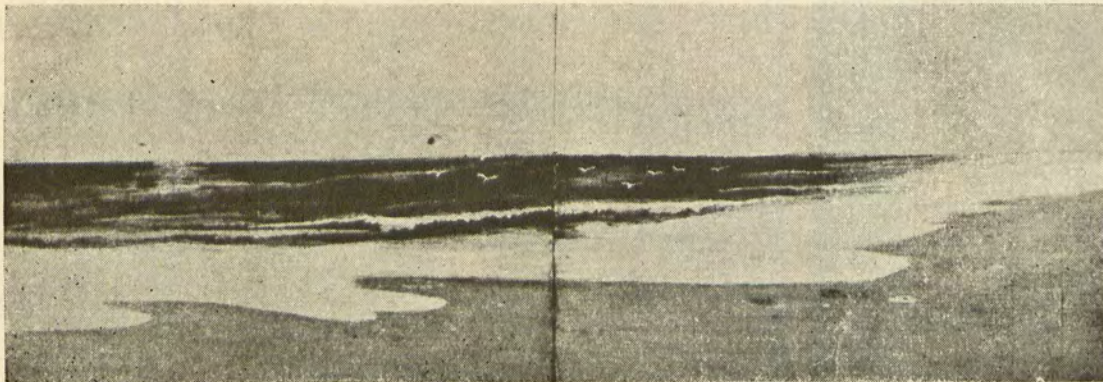


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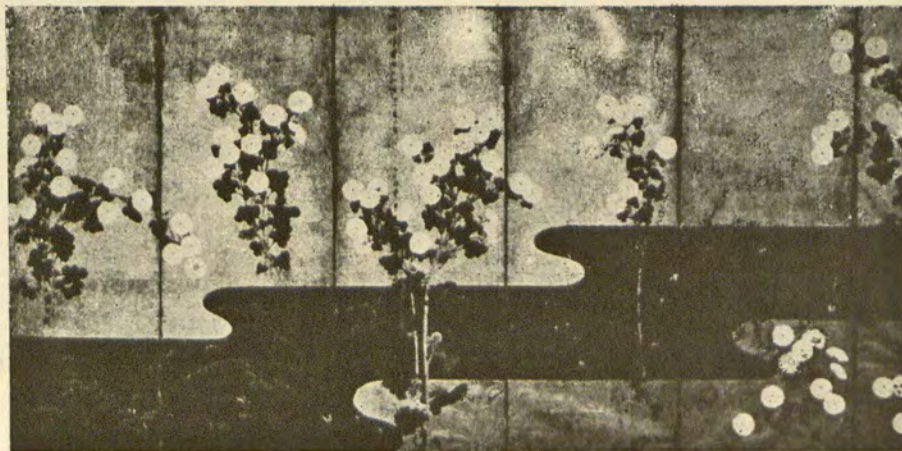
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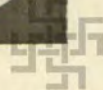


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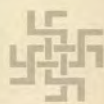
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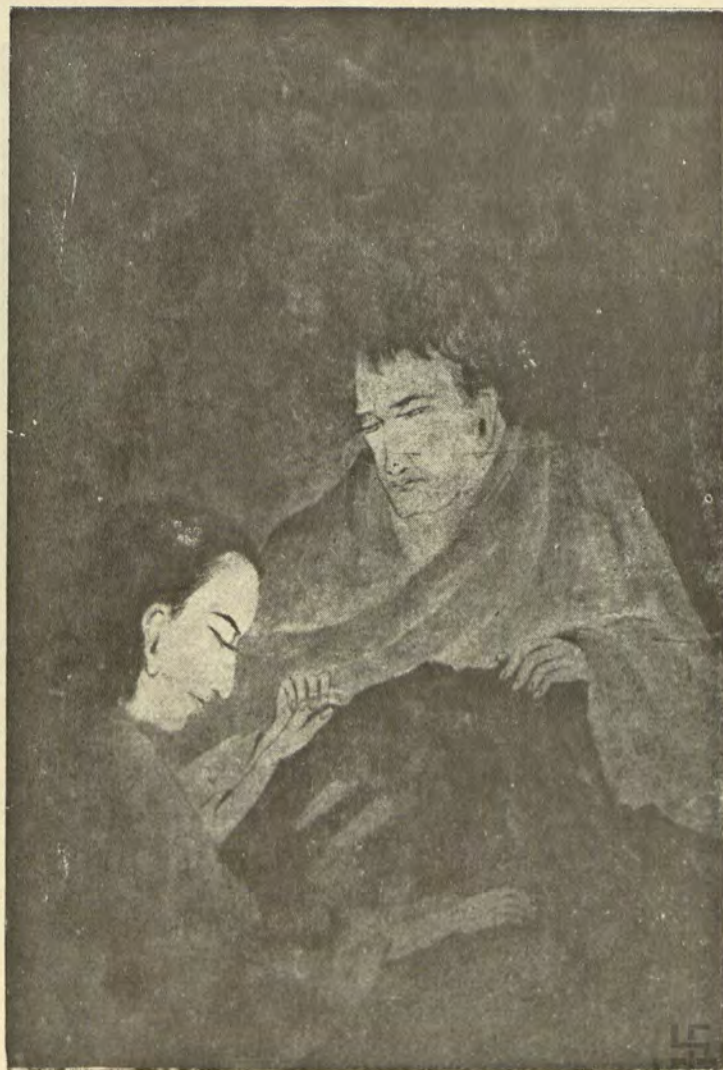


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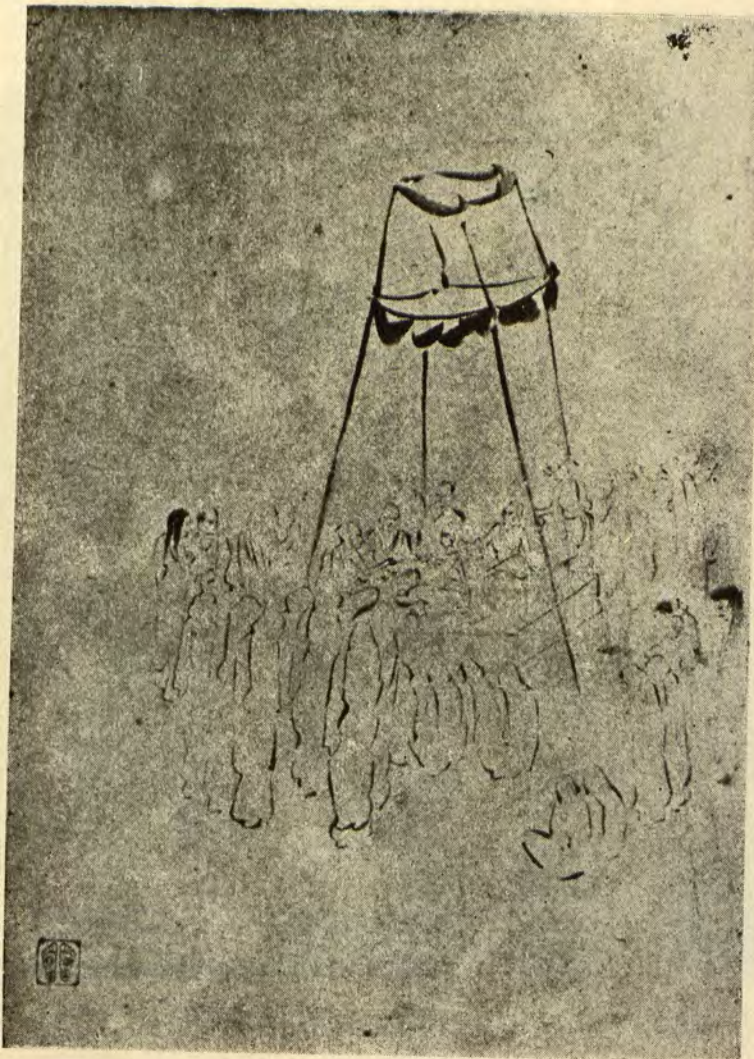


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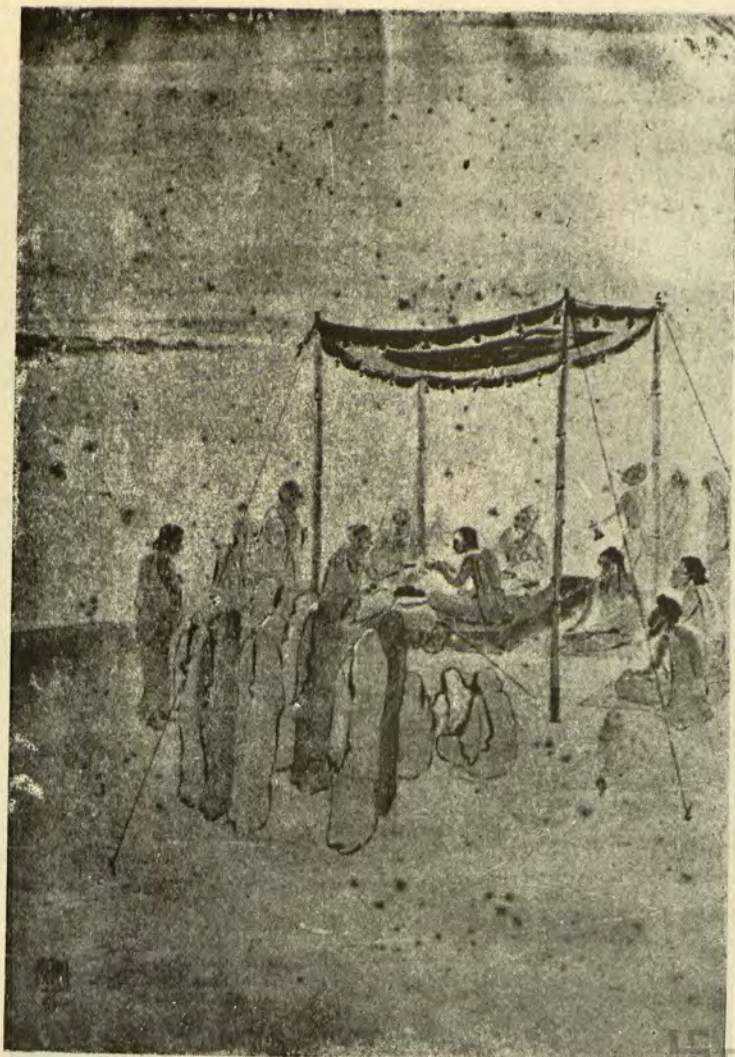
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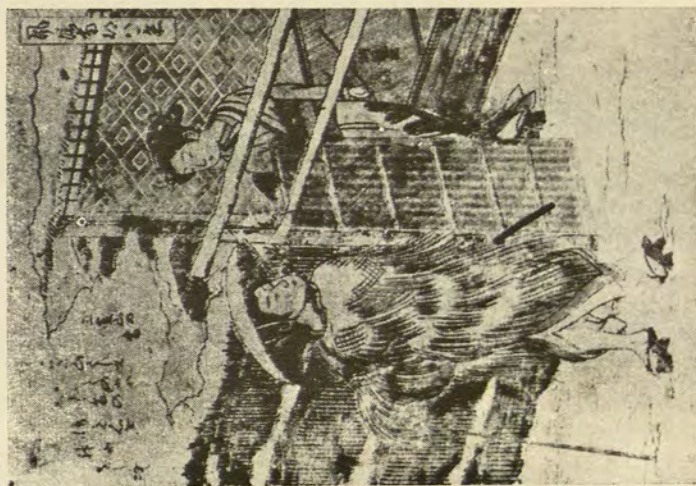
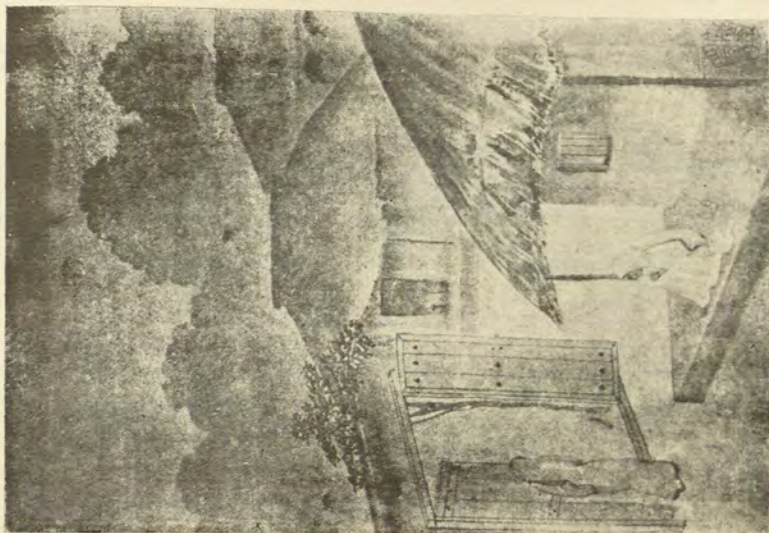
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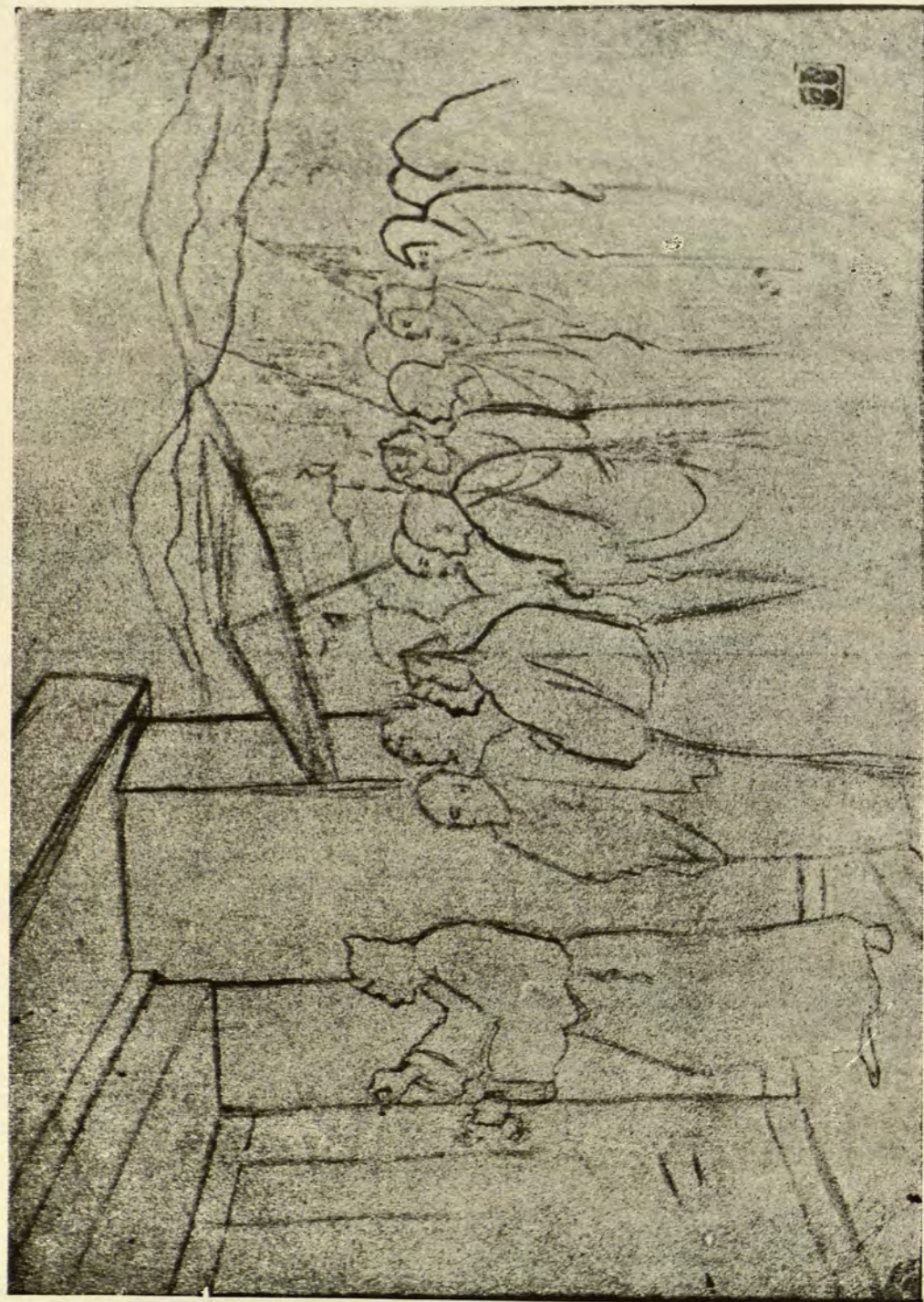
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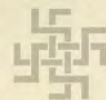










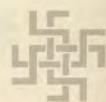






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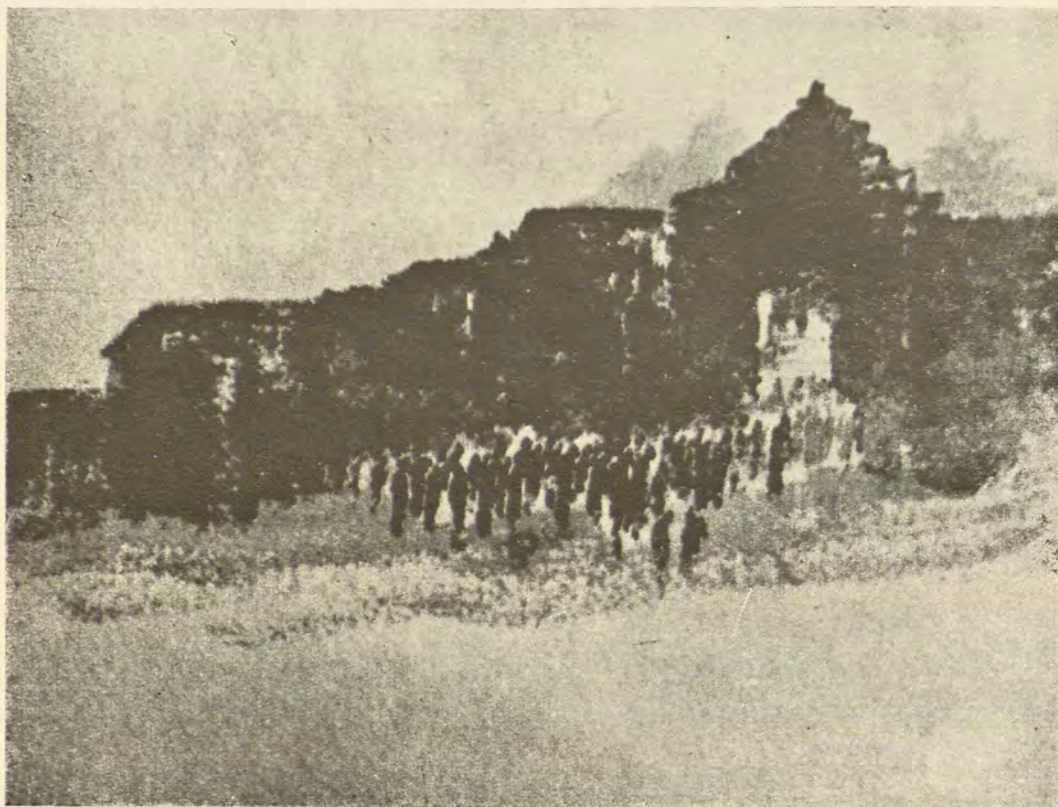


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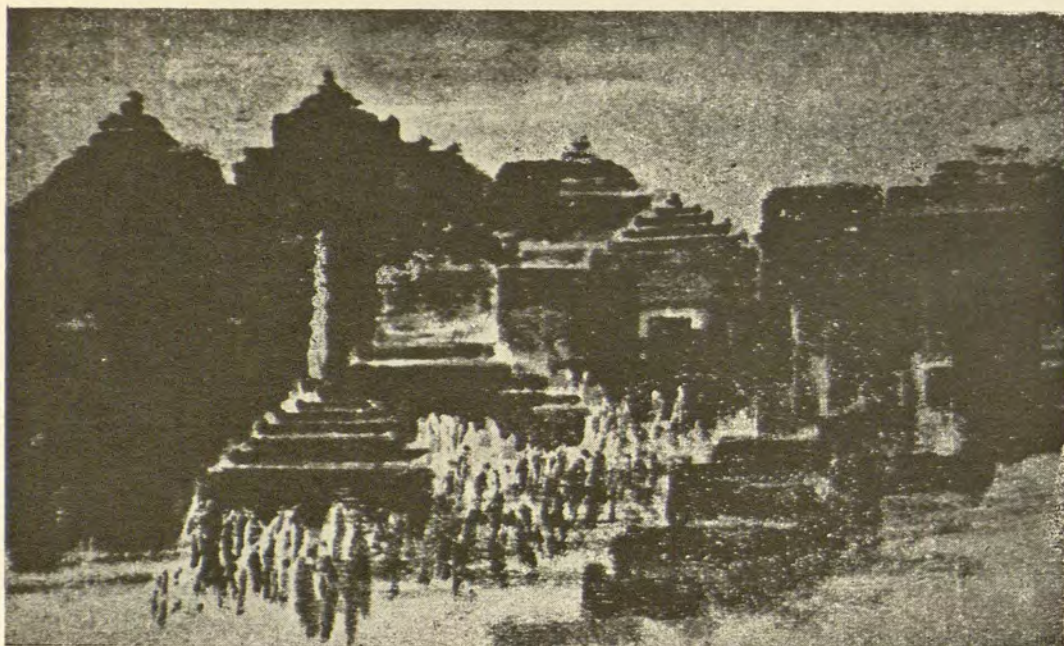






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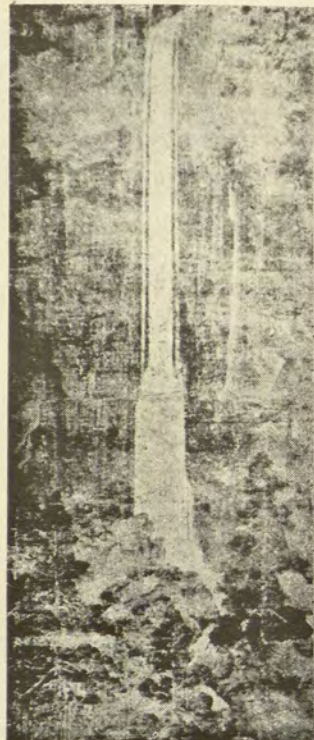
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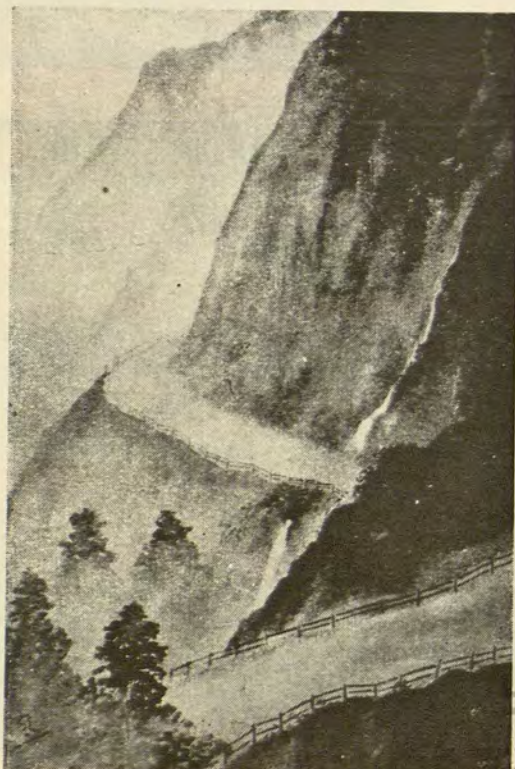
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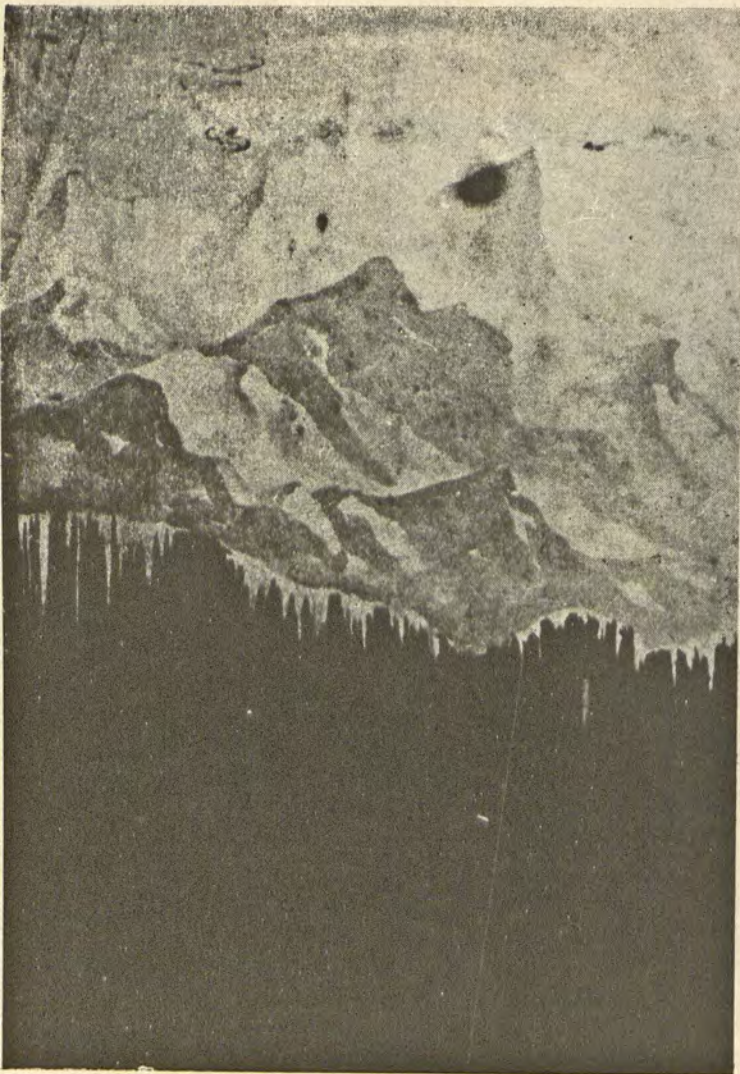
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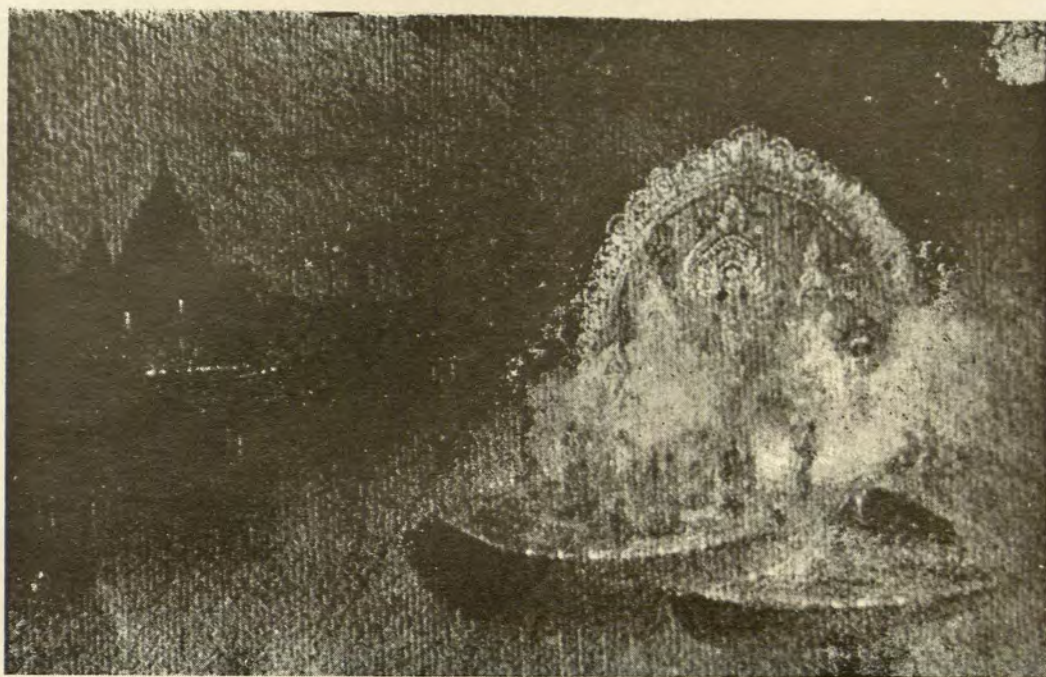


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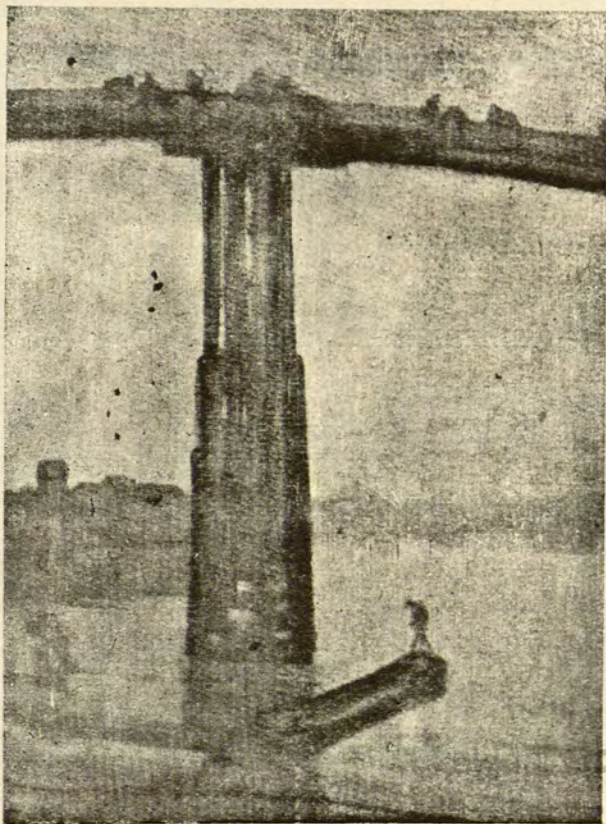






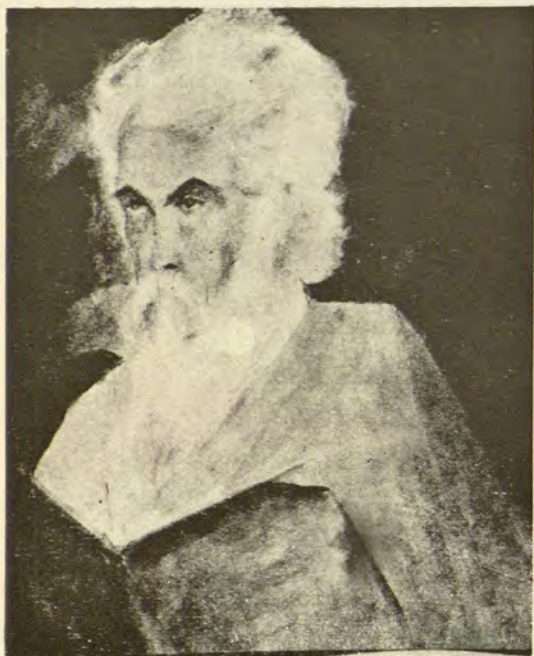
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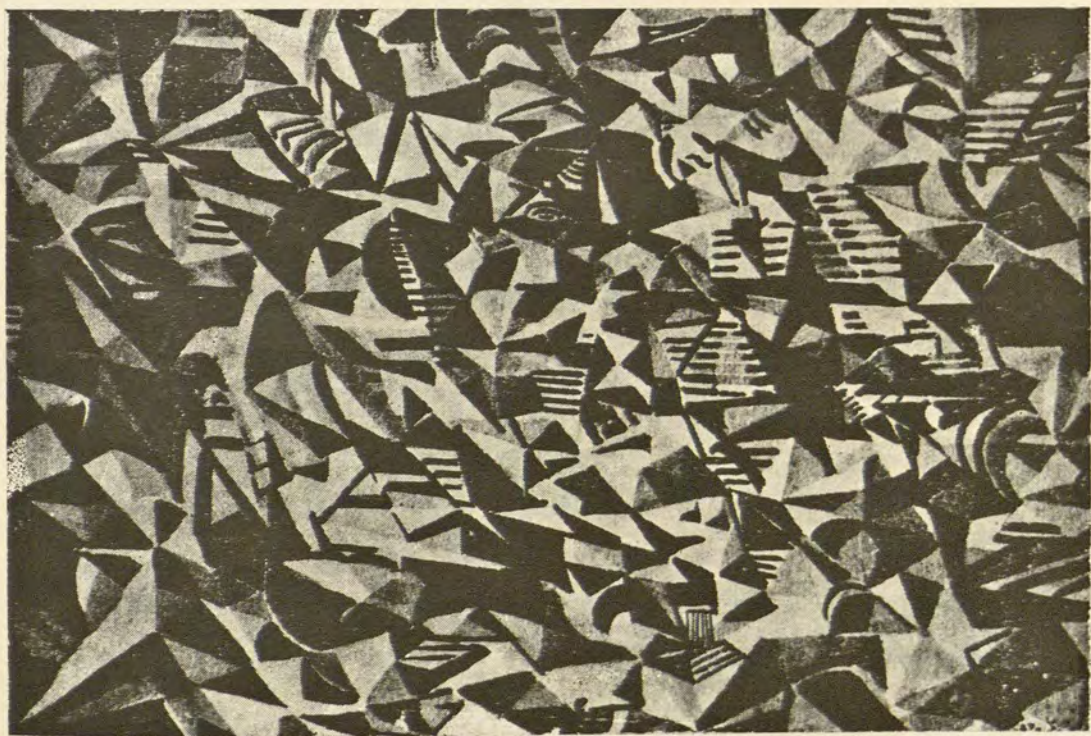


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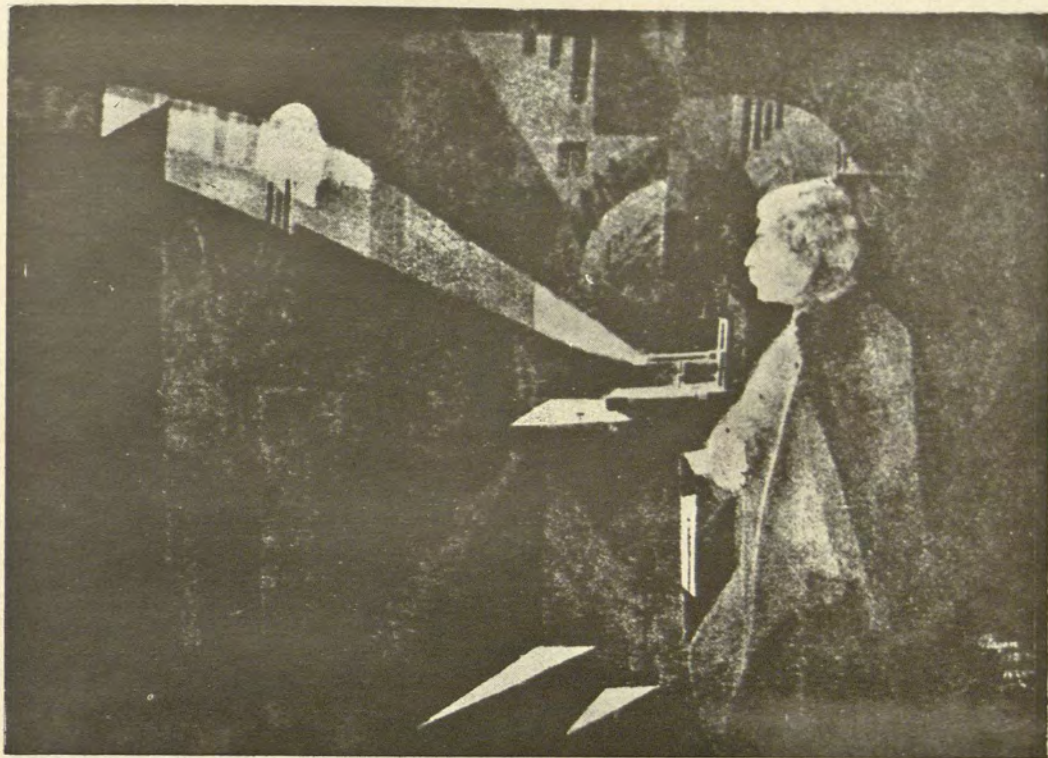
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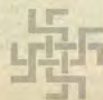


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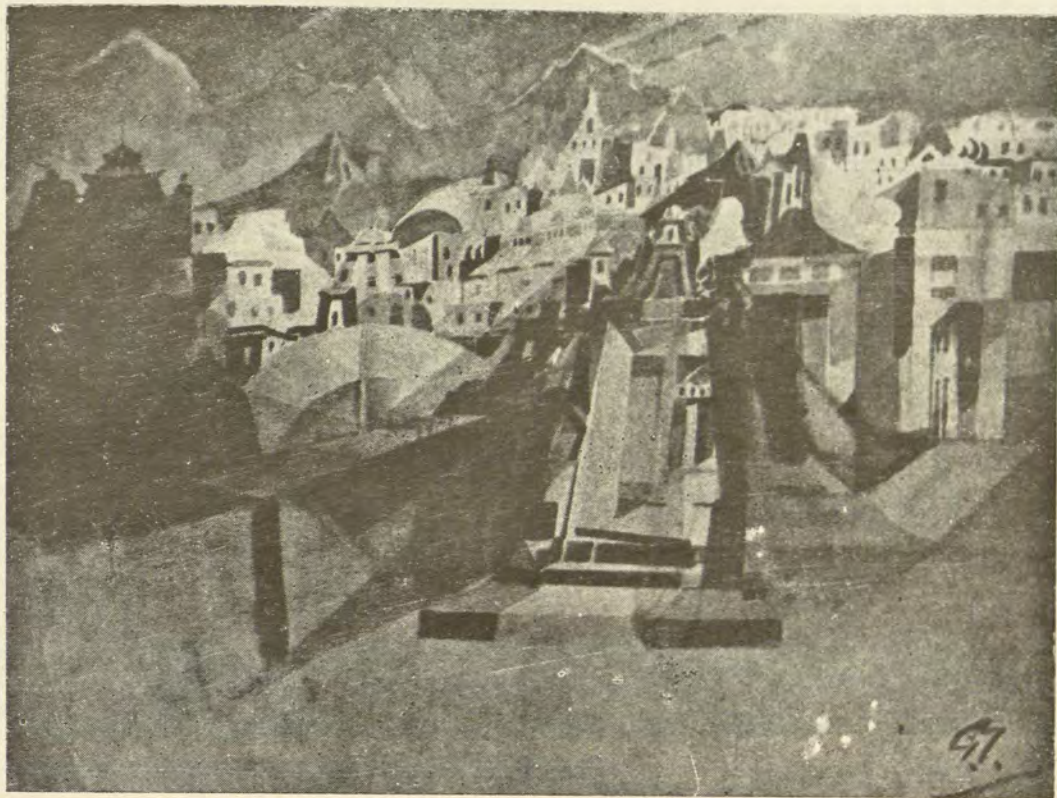
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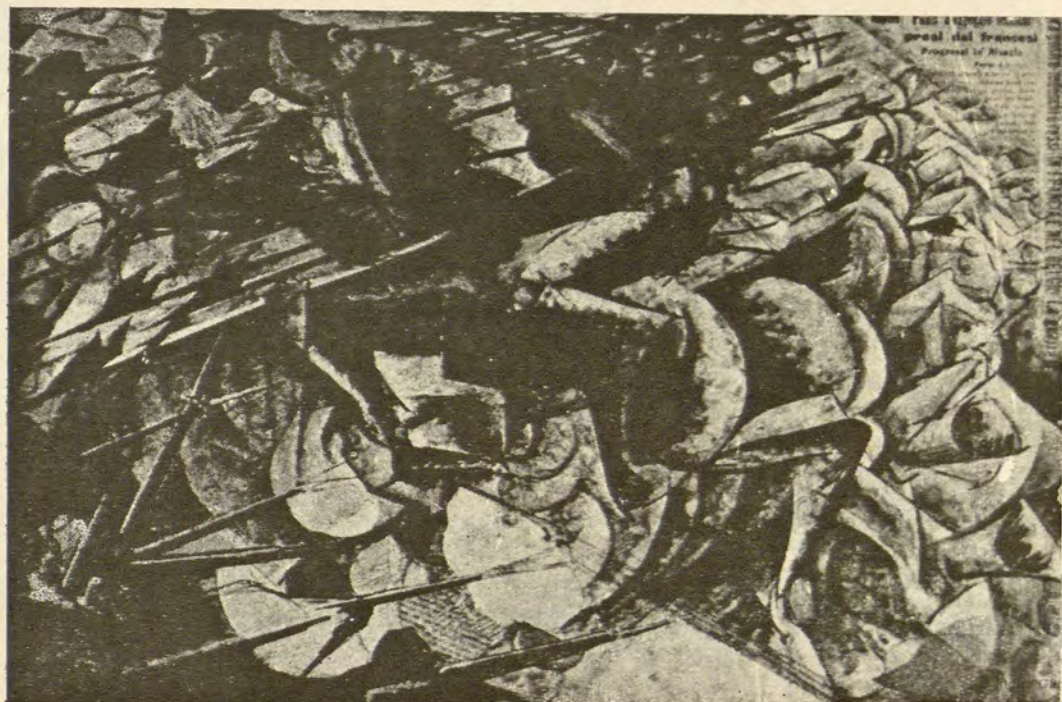




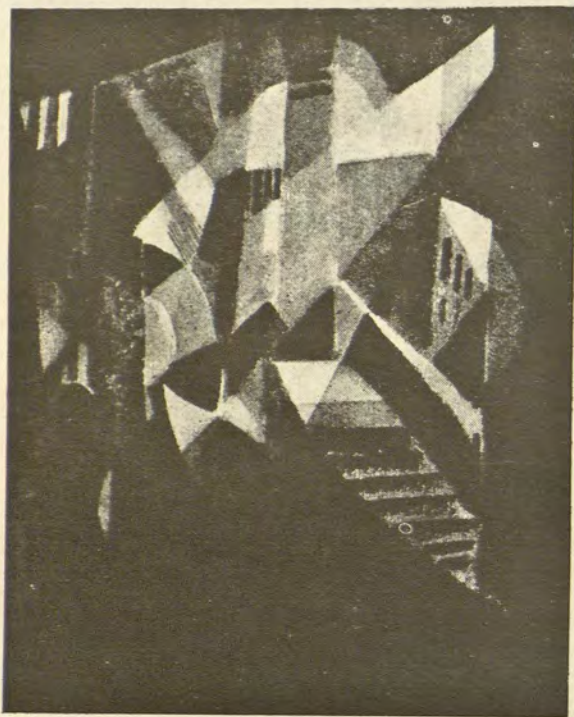


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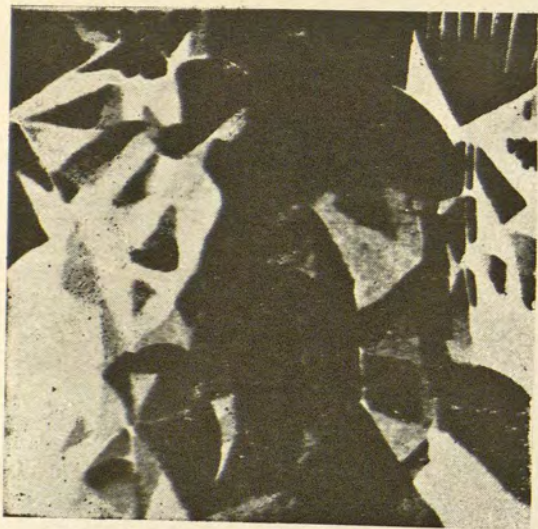




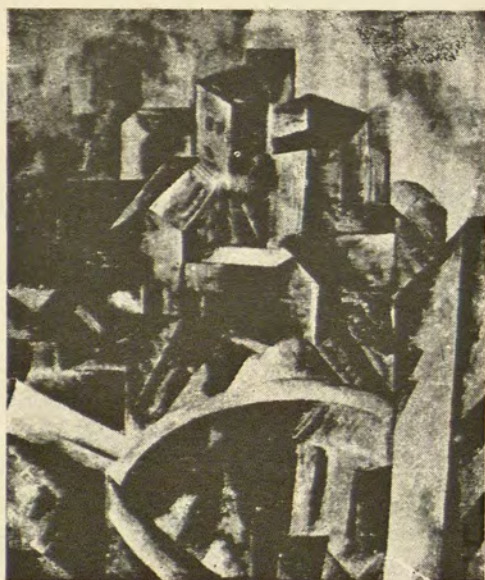
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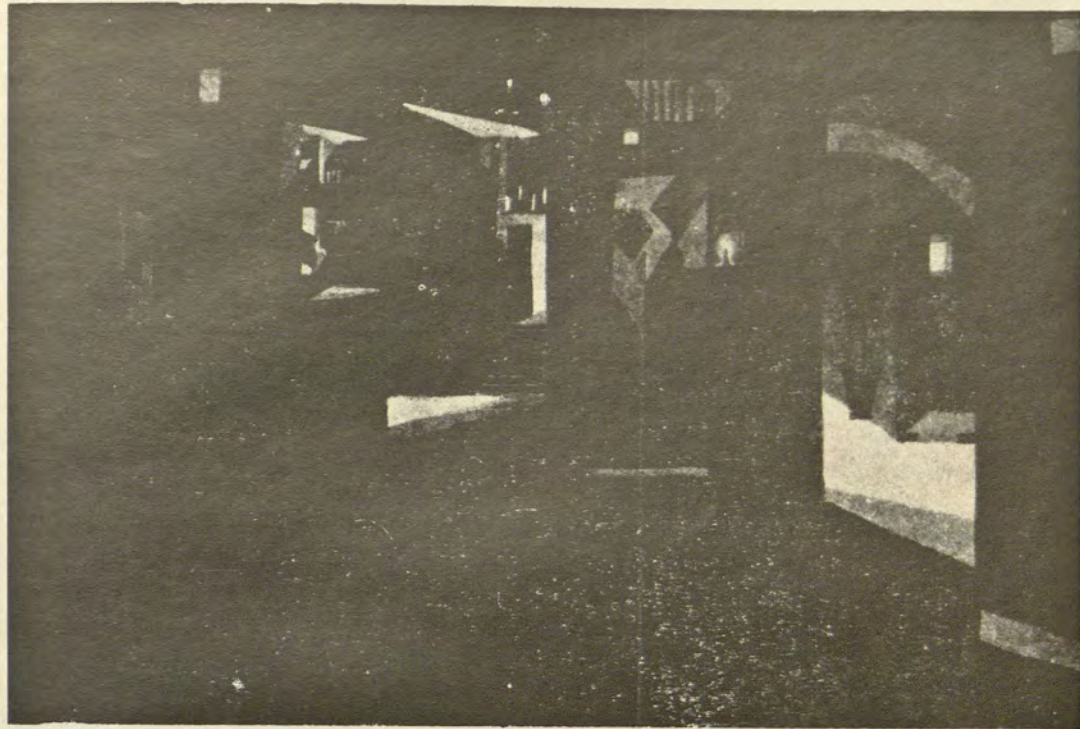
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189

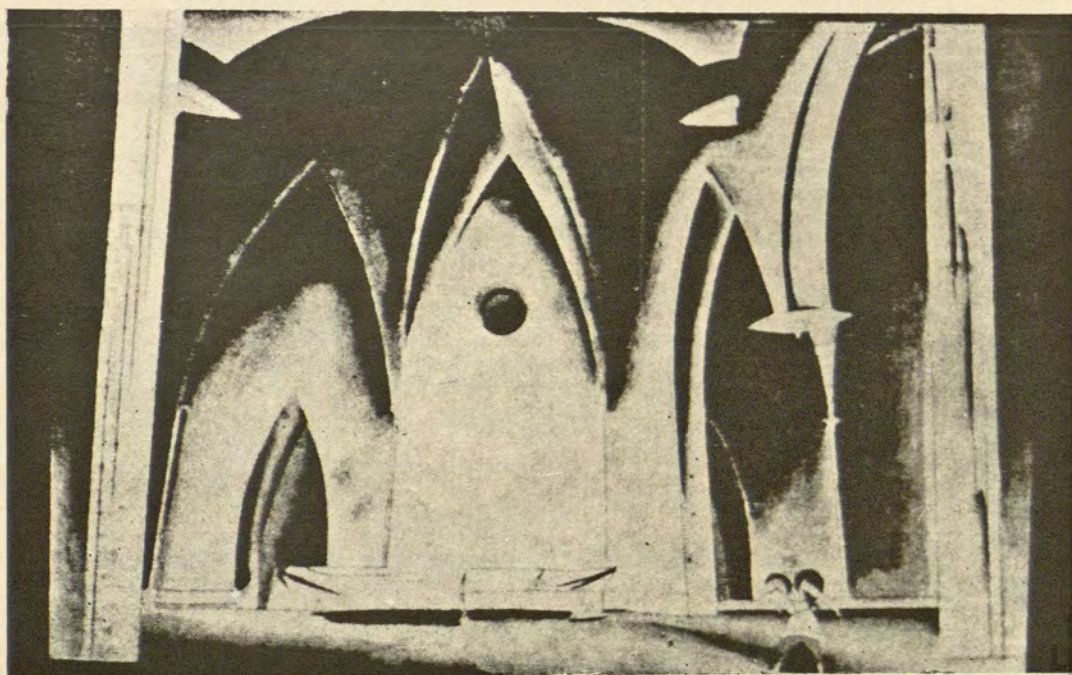




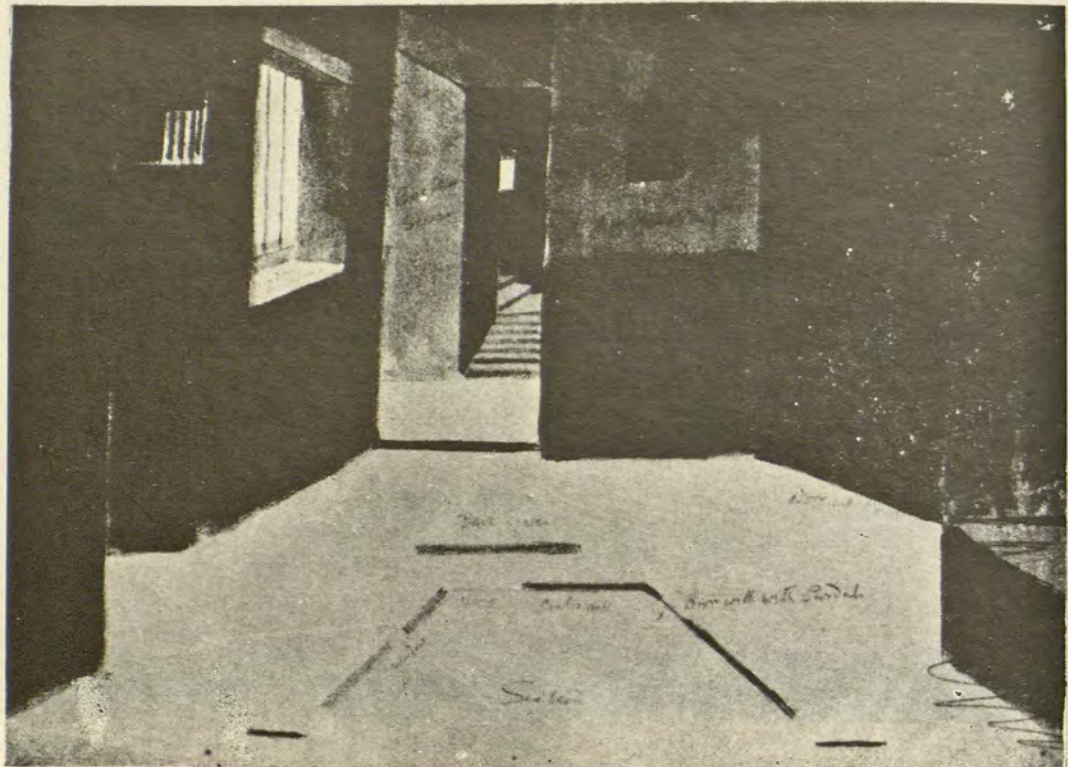


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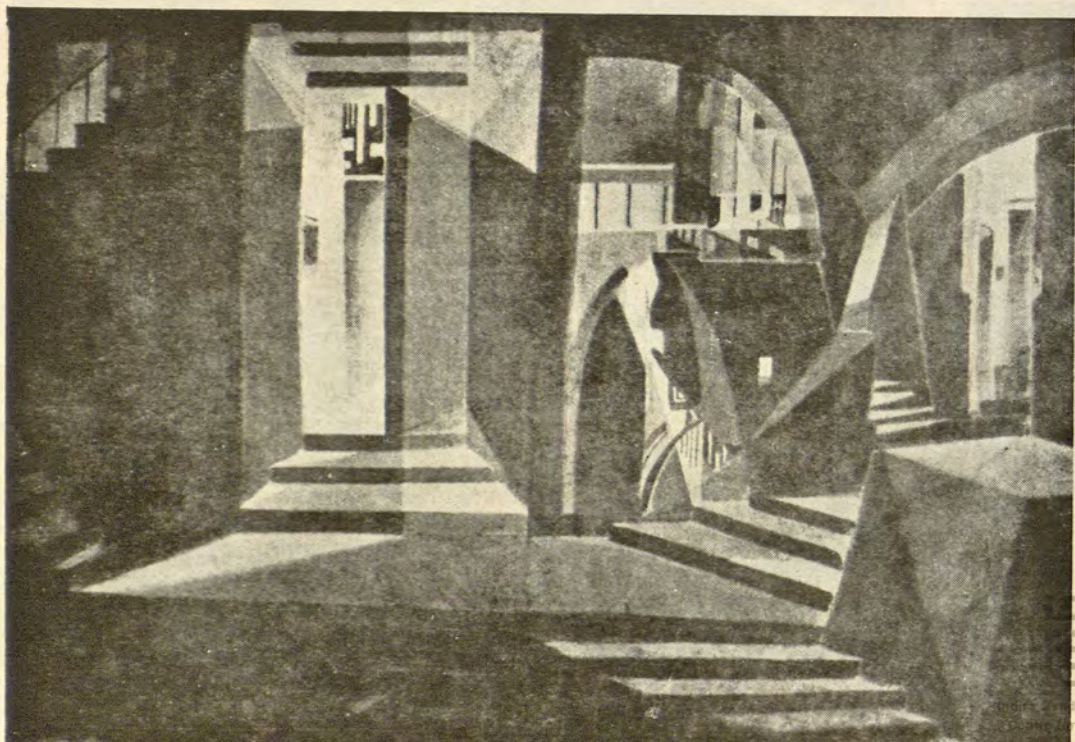




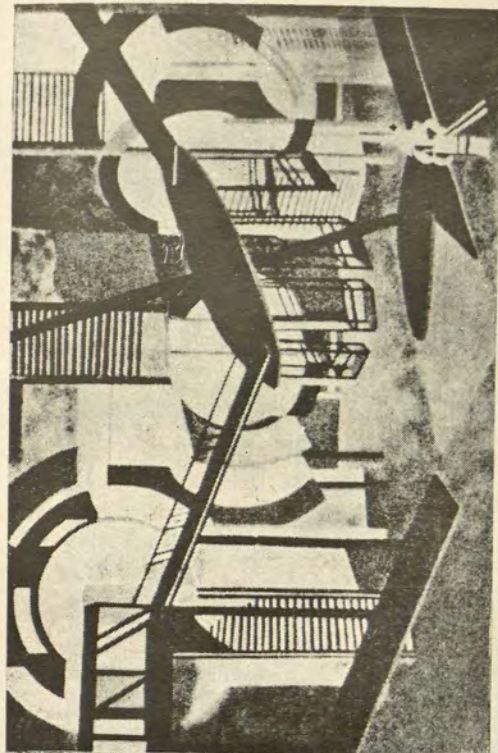


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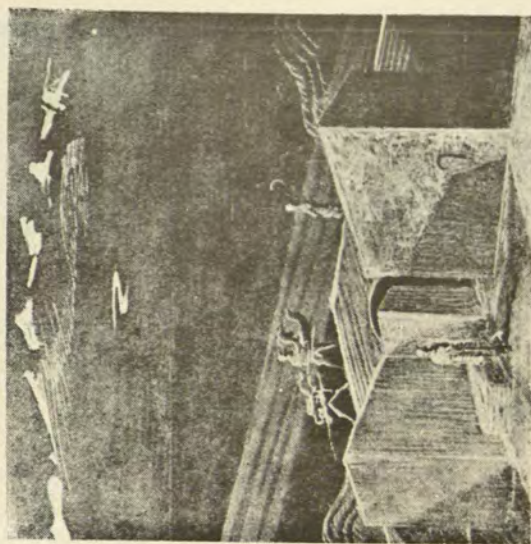
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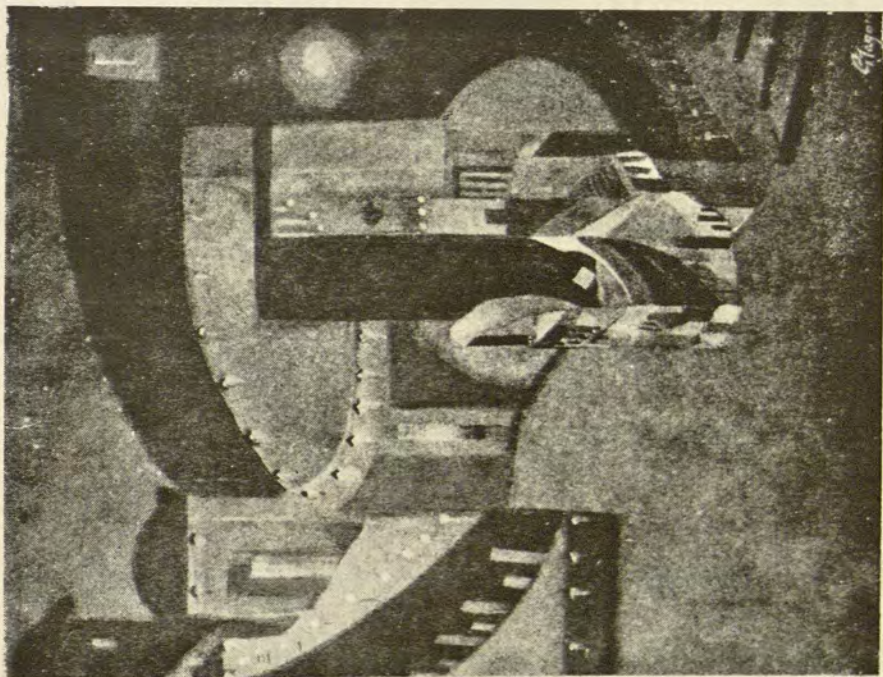


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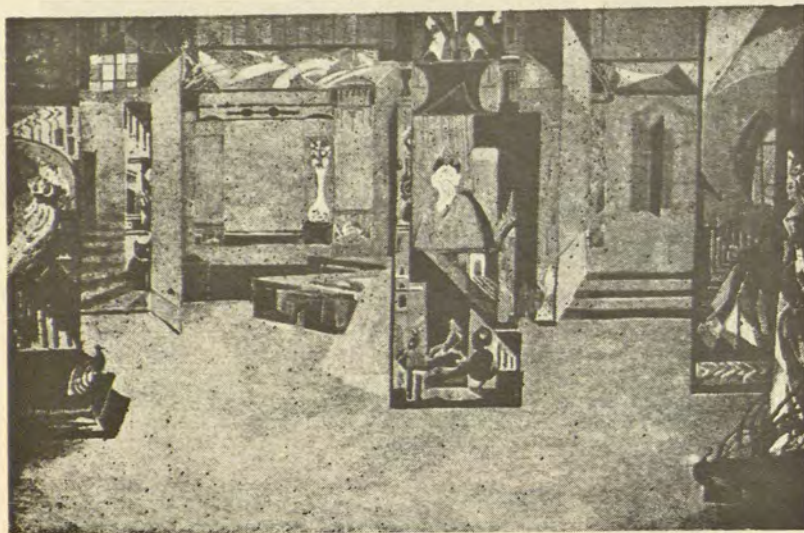


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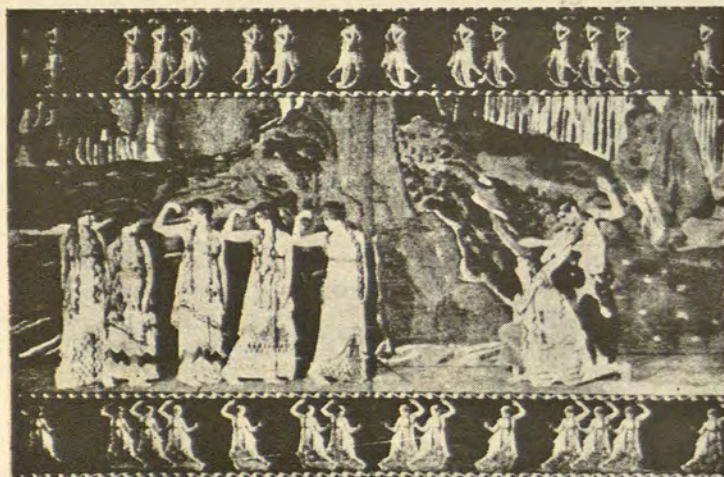
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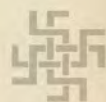
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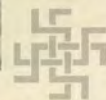
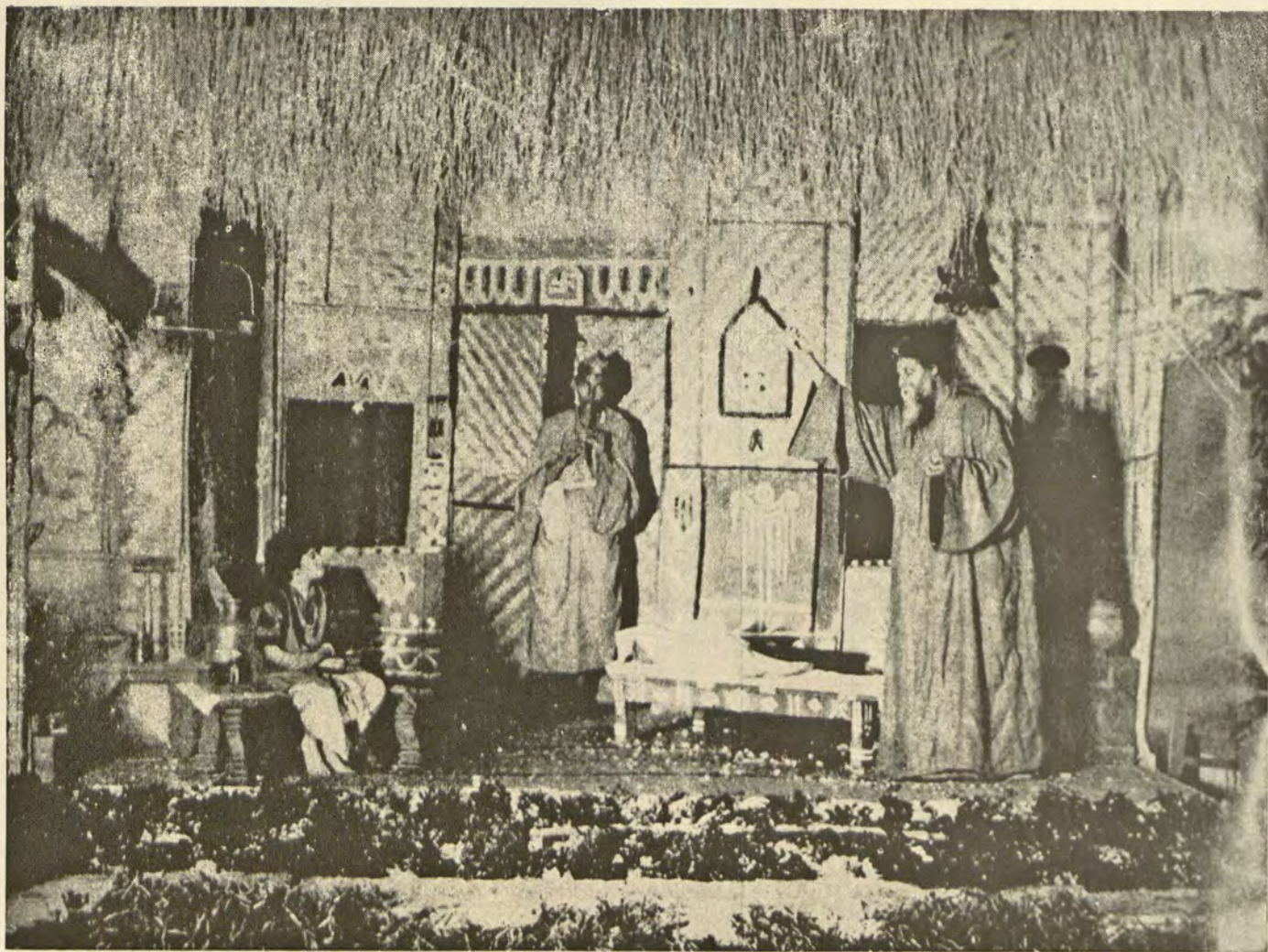


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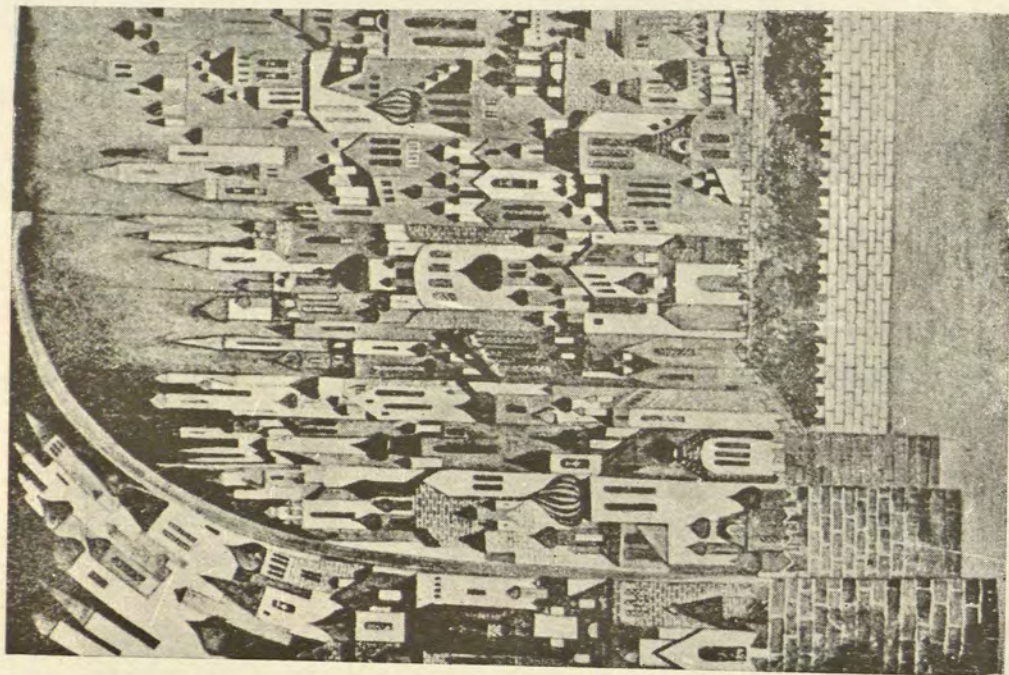


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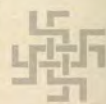
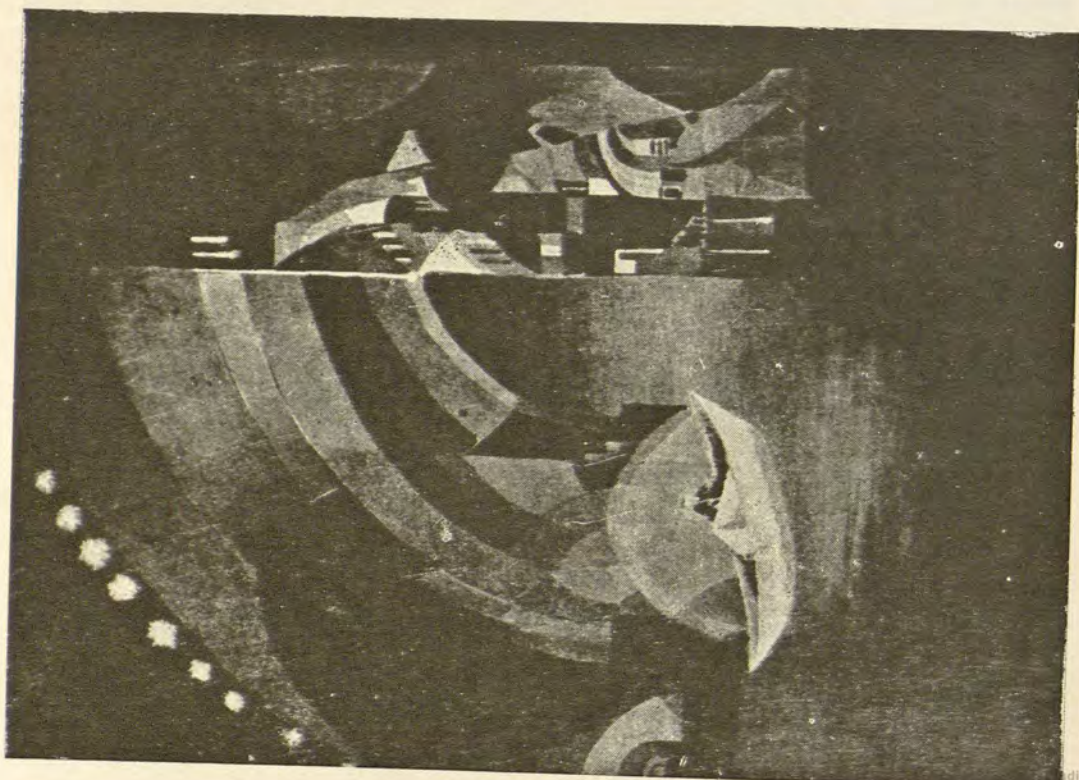






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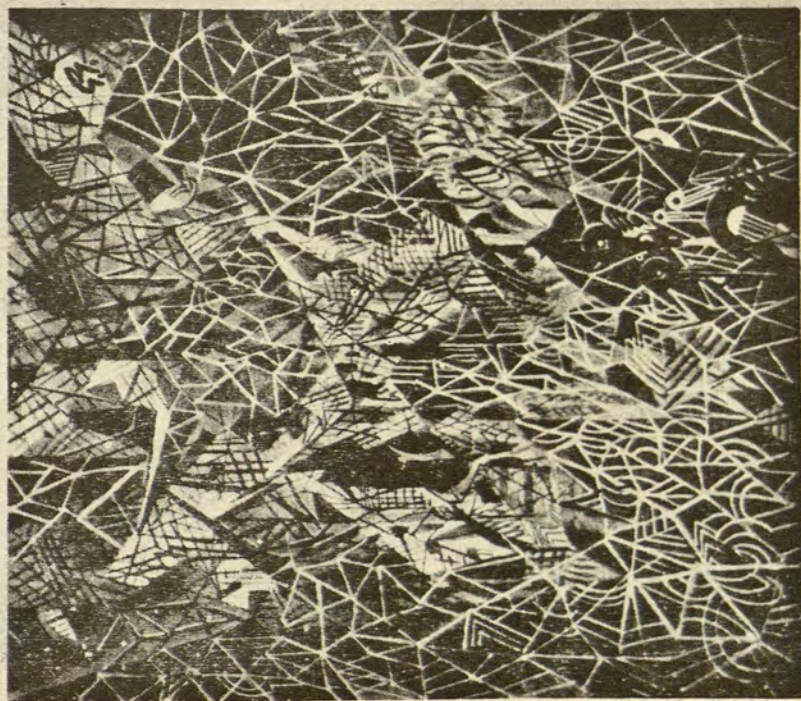




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ରଞ୍ଜକରବୀ

ଶ୍ରୀ ପ୍ରସାନ୍ନାଥ ମାକଡ଼



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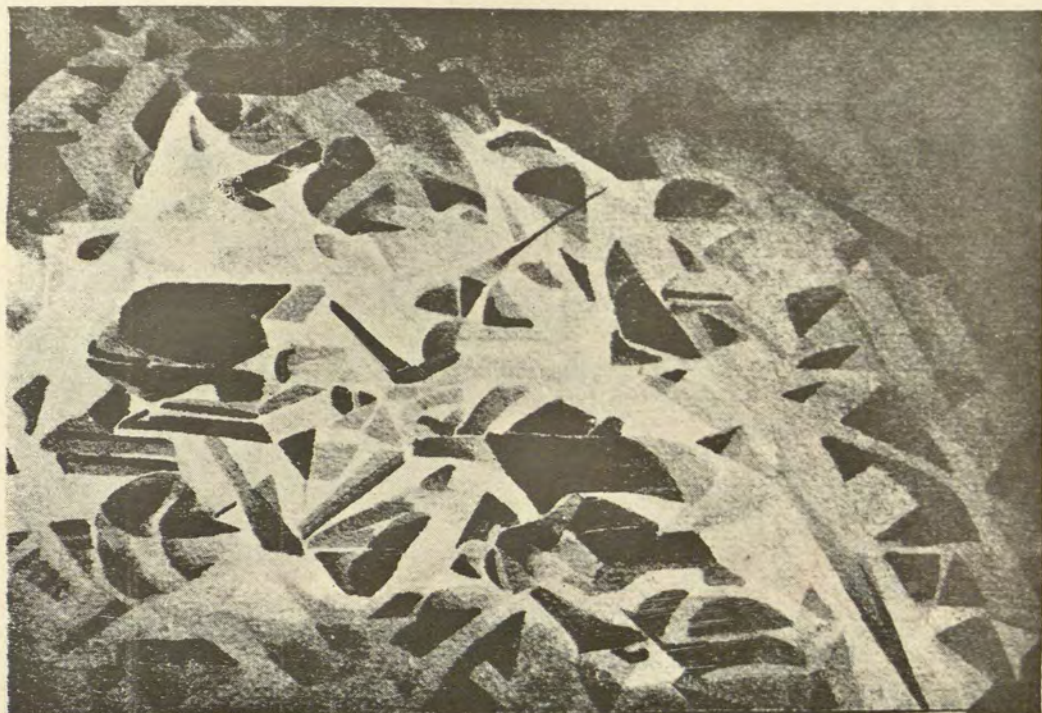


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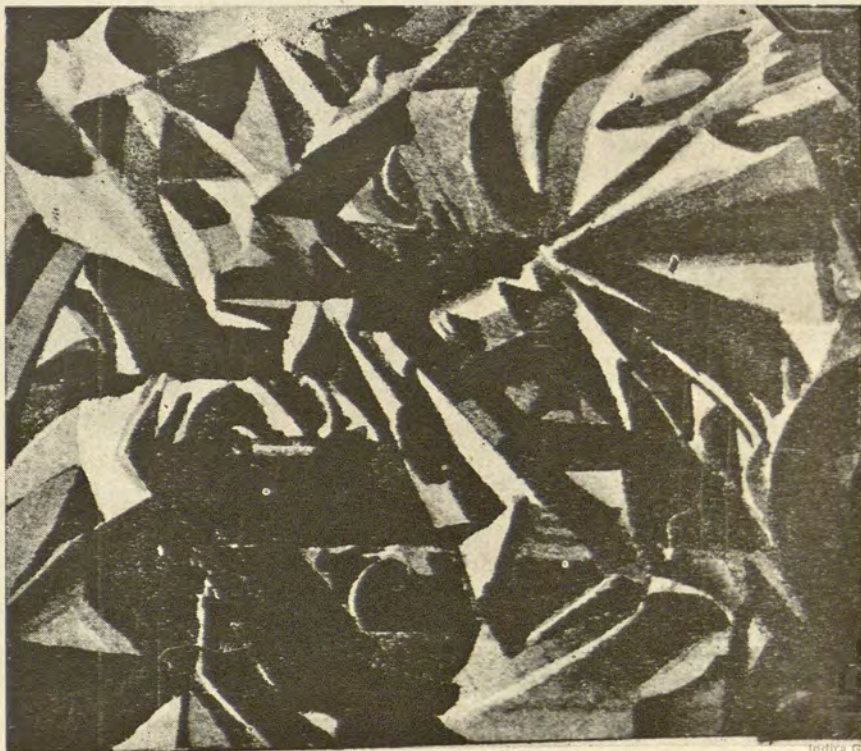




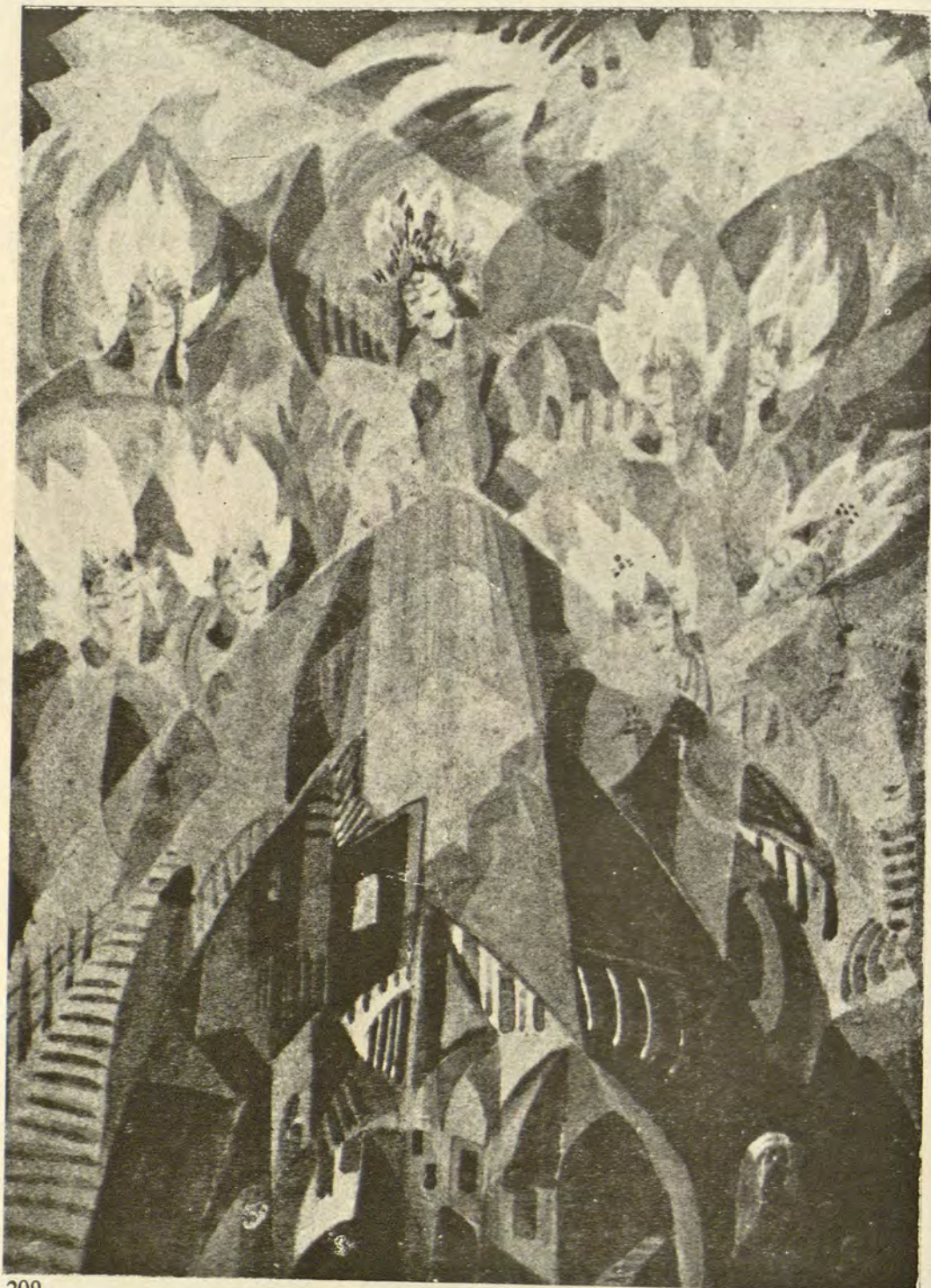


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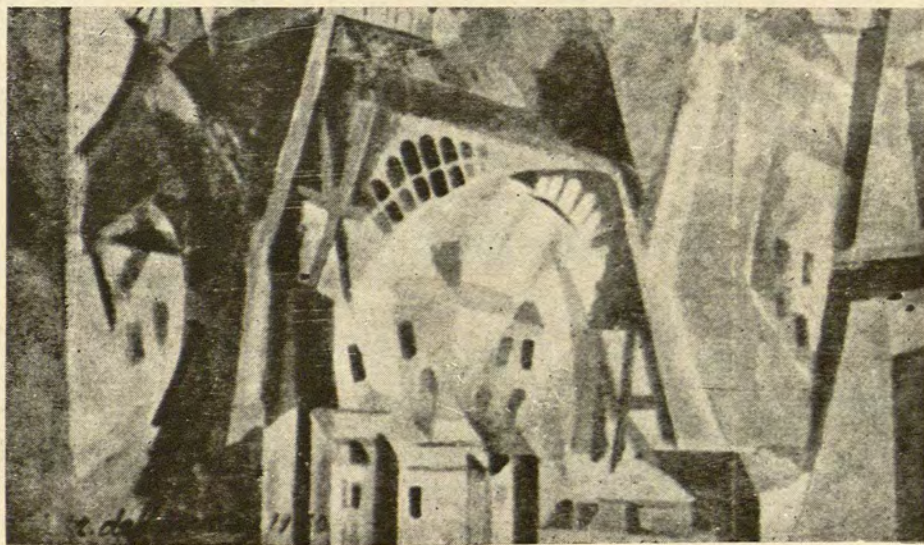






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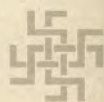
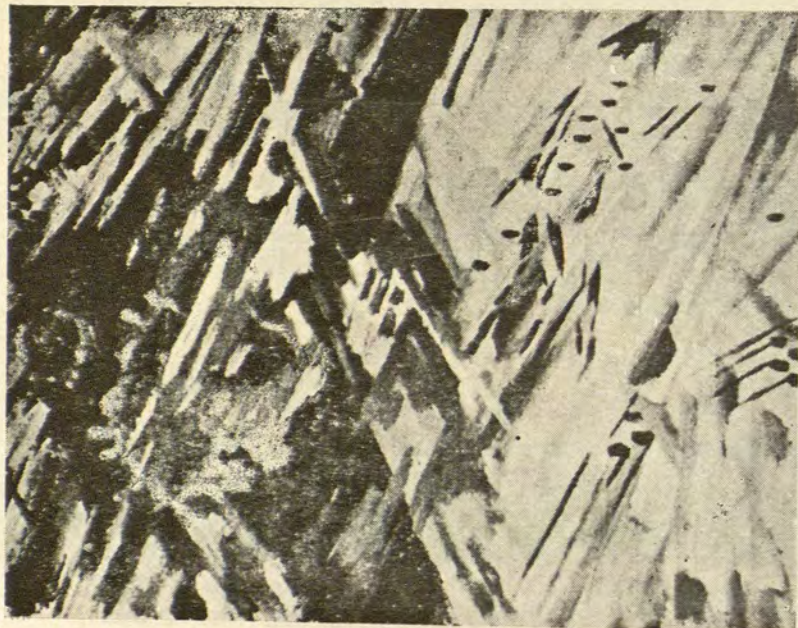


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214



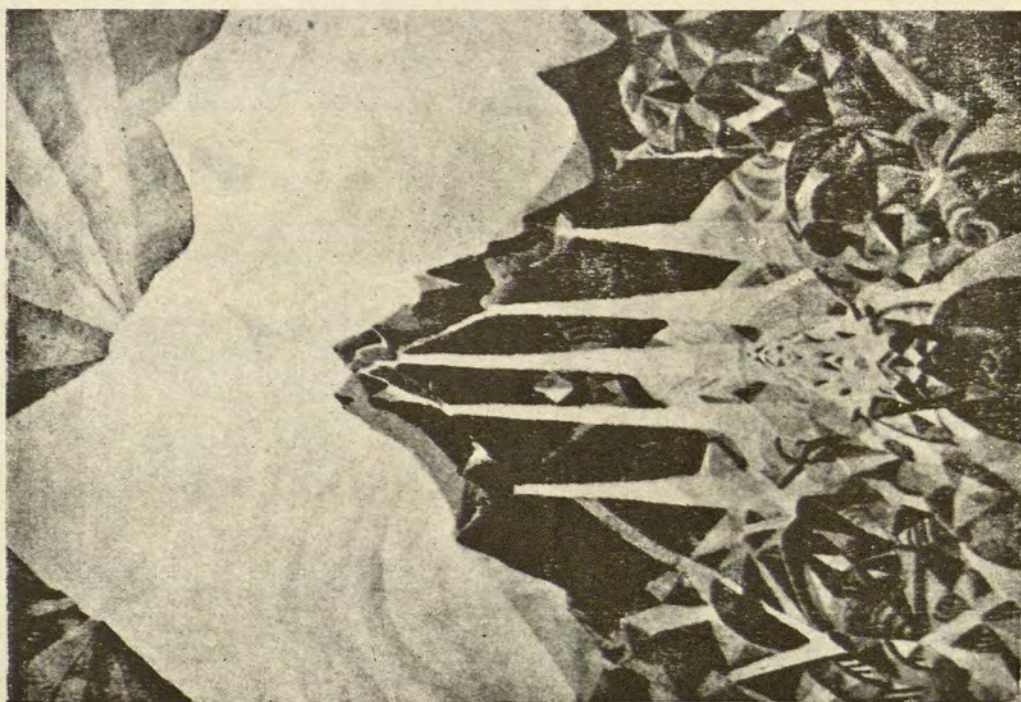




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217



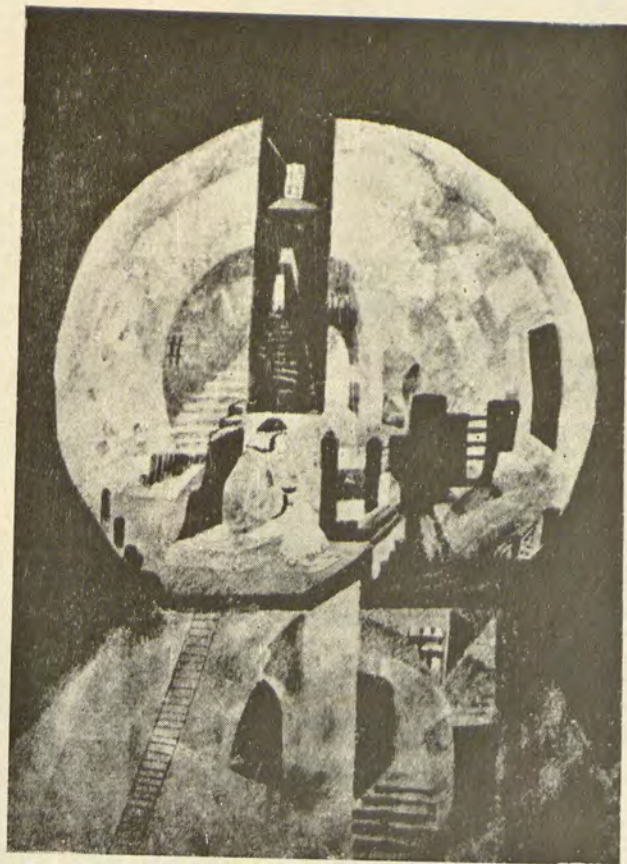
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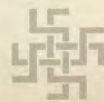




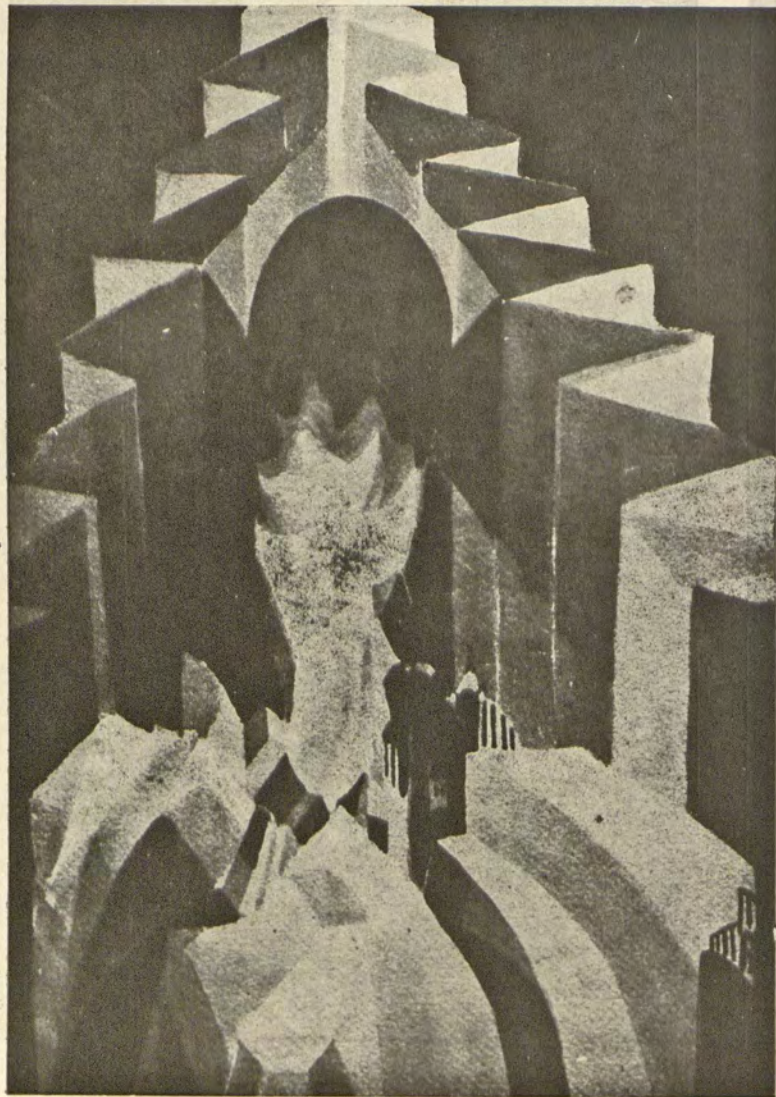
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219

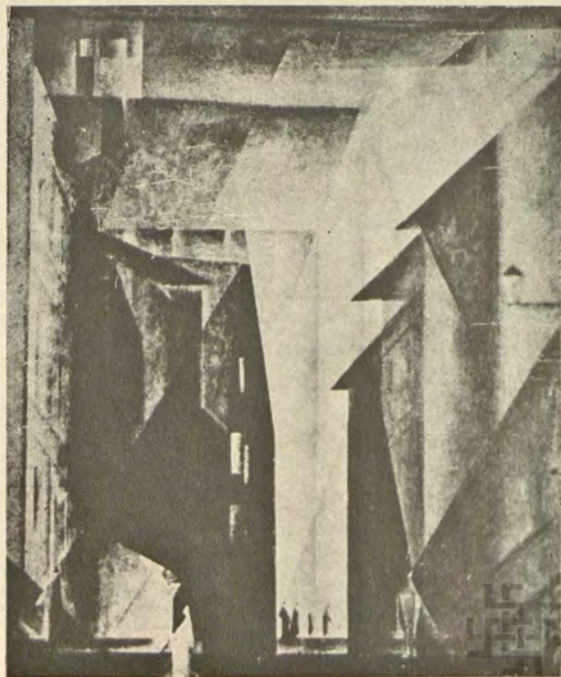




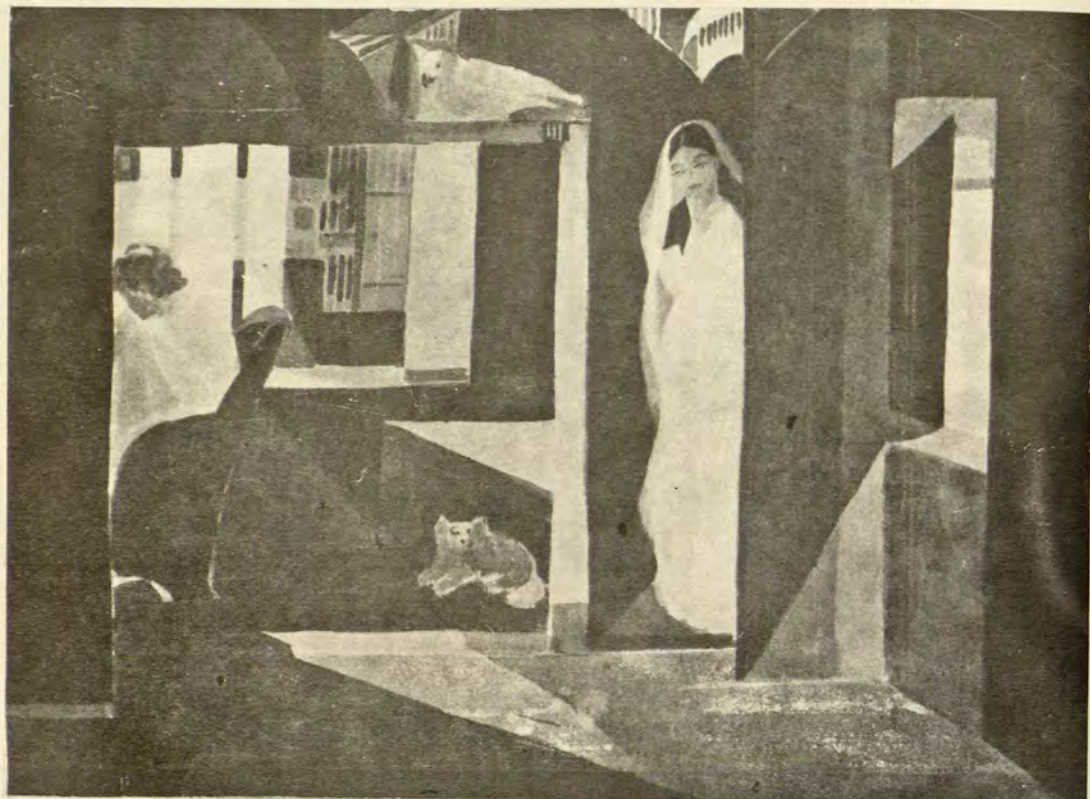


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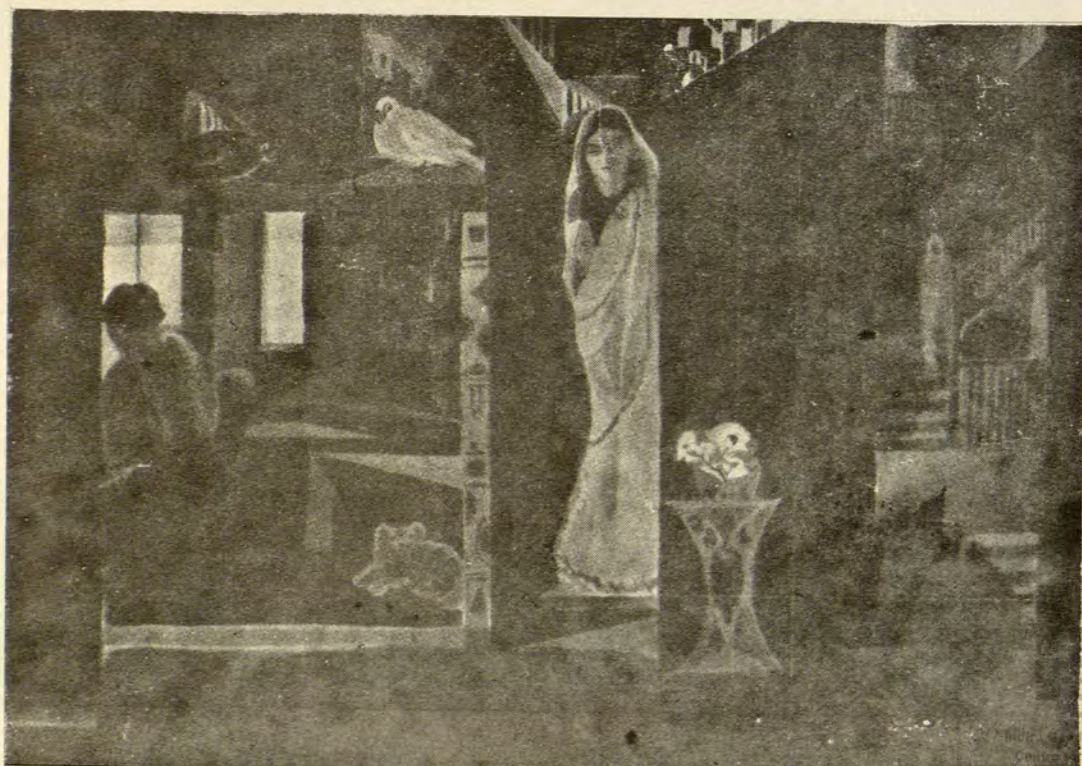
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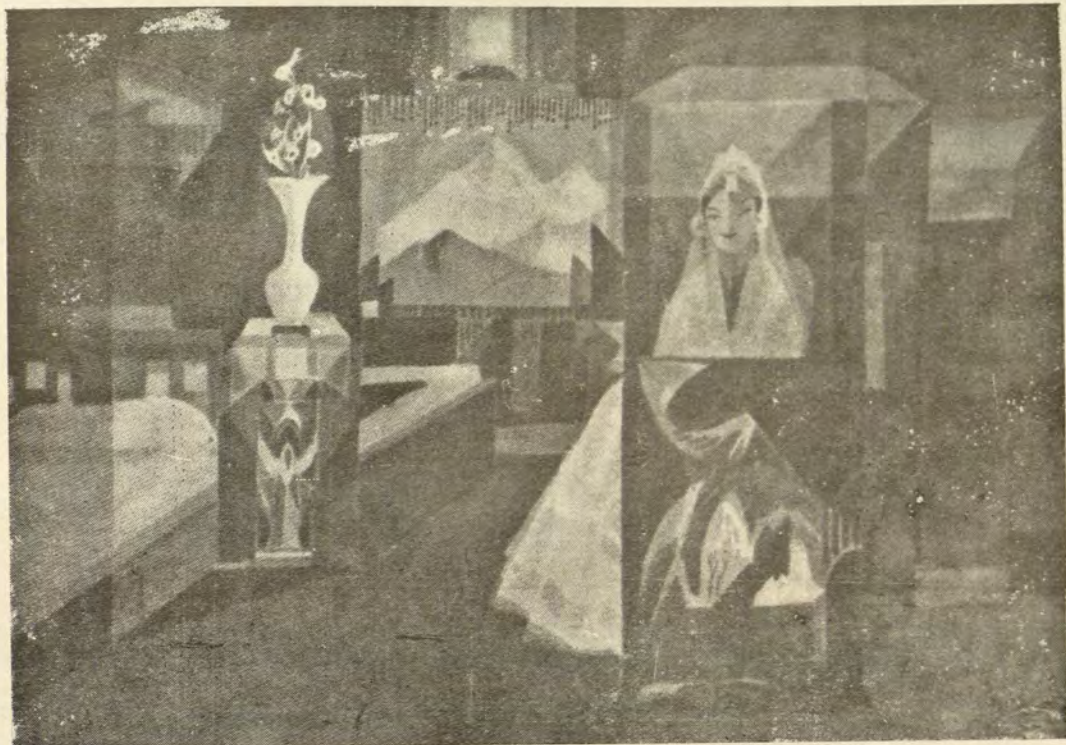
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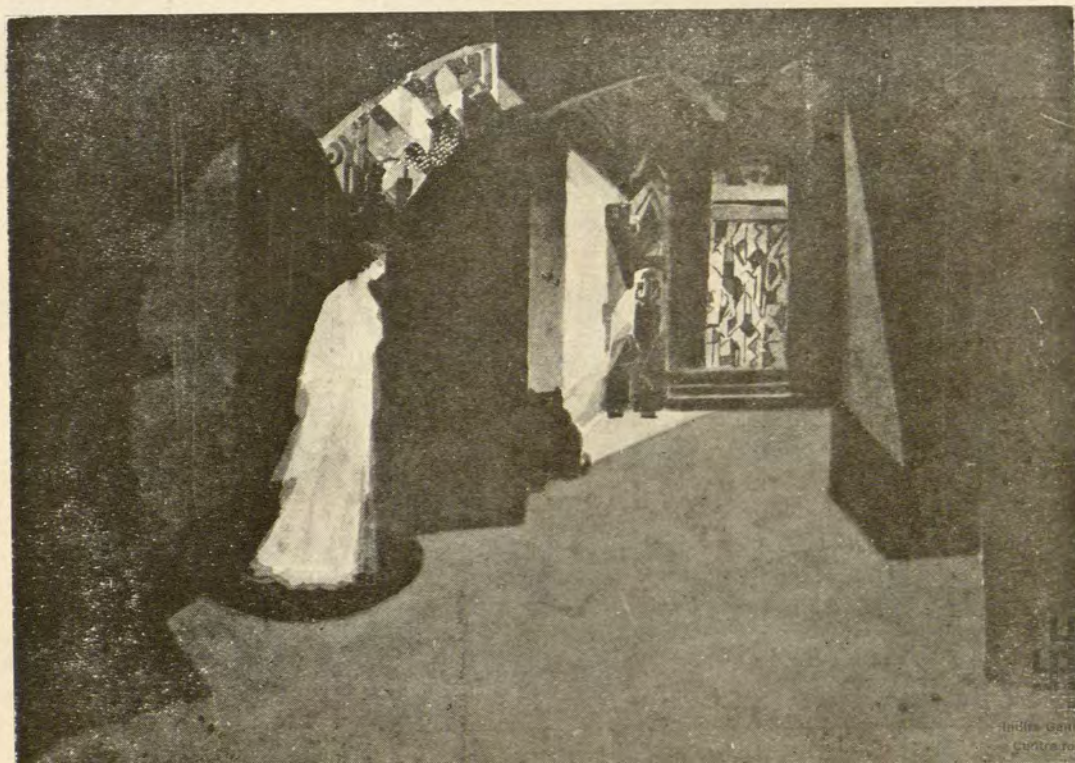




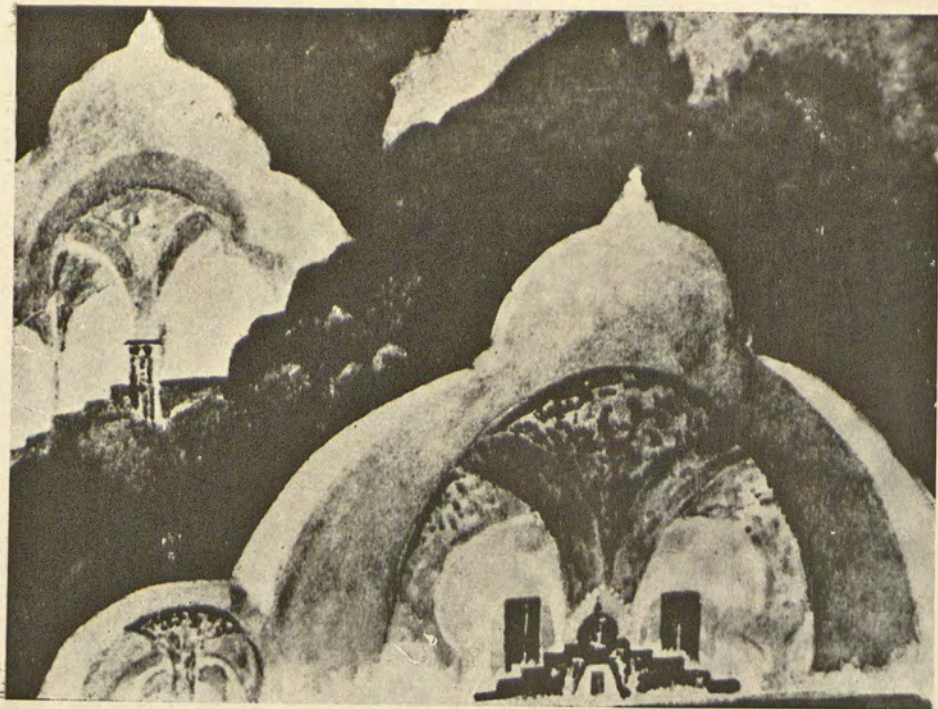


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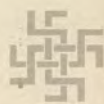
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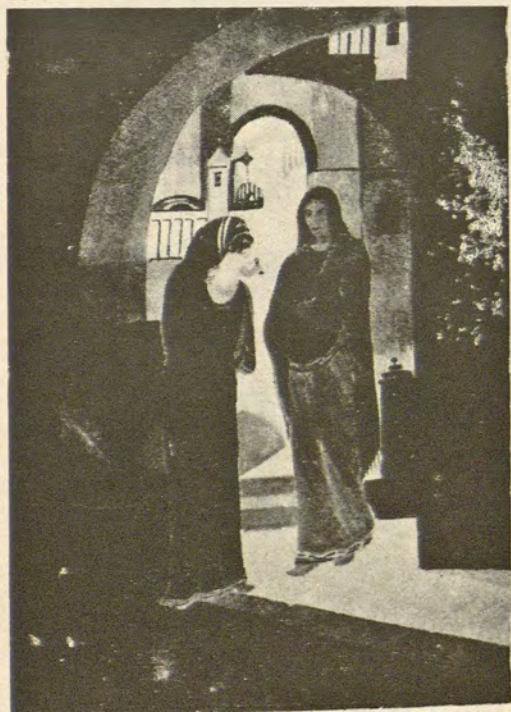


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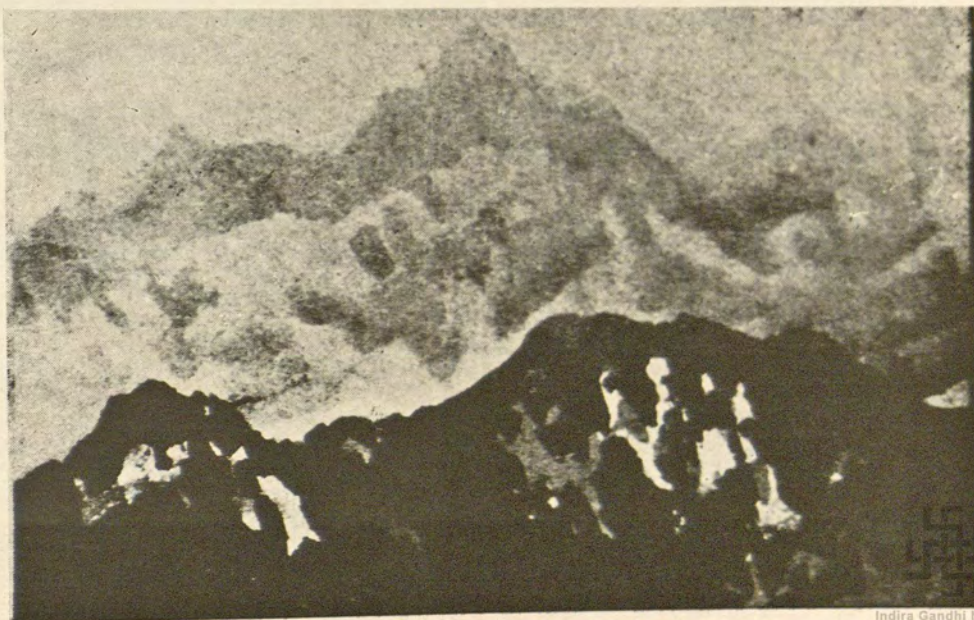


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Chinoravath

शिवराम,

शिवराम

20/12/79

शिवराम

शिवराम

Moscow

Sep. 15  
1930





The language of sound is a key deep in the silence of the infinite. The universe has its eternal language of gesture, it talks in the voice of pressures and forces. Every object in this world proclaims in the dumb signal of lines and colours the fact that it is not a logical abstraction or a mere thing of use, but it is unique in itself, it carries the miracle of its existence.

But there are countless things whom we know but do not recognise in the fact that they exist though we may have to acknowledge them as facts that they are injurious or beneficial. ~~It is enough for me~~ It is enough for me that a flower exists as a flower, but my cigarette has no other claim upon me for its recognition but as <sup>being</sup> useful for my smelly habit.

But there are other things which have certain rhythm or character in their forms which makes us acknowledge the fact that they are. In the book of creation they are the sciences that are underlined with coloured pencil and we cannot pass them by. They seem to cry out, "See, here I am," and our mind bows its head and never questions, "Who are you?"

In pictures the artist creates the language of unthought reality, and we are satisfied that we see. It may not be the representation of a beautiful woman but that of a commonplace thing, or of something that has no credential of truth in nature but only in <sup>our</sup> own subjective significance.

People often ask me about the meaning of my pictures. I remain silent even as my pictures are. They are for them to express themselves and not to explain. They have nothing to do with their own appearance, but if that appearance carried its ultimate worth they then they remain, otherwise they are rejected and forgotten even though they may have the same scientific truth or ethical justification.

Sept. 17 Moscow

1930

सत्यमेव जयते

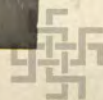
















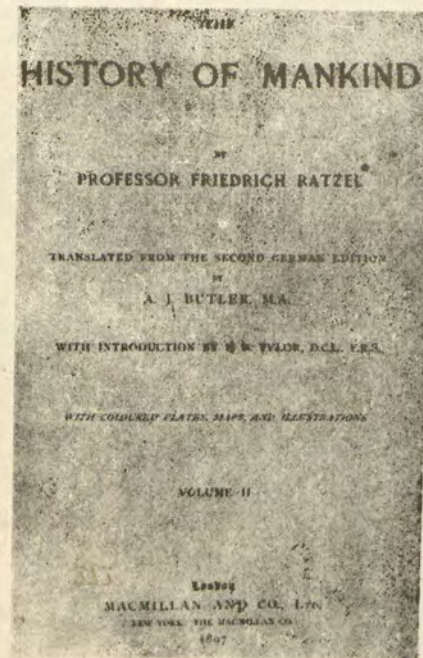
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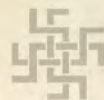
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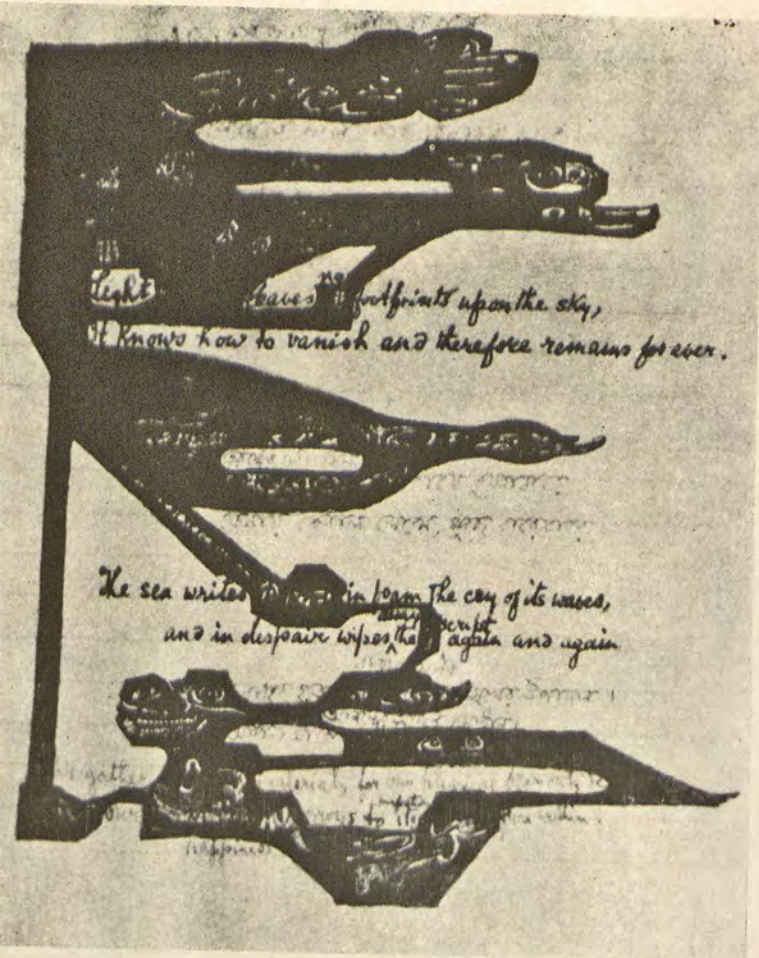
268



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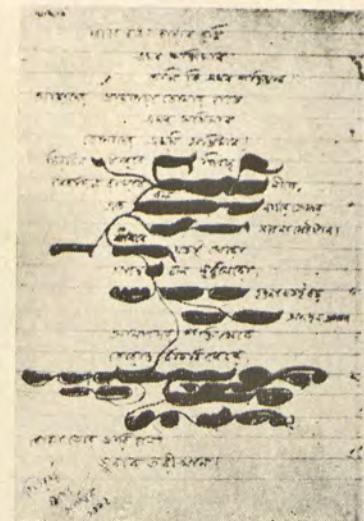




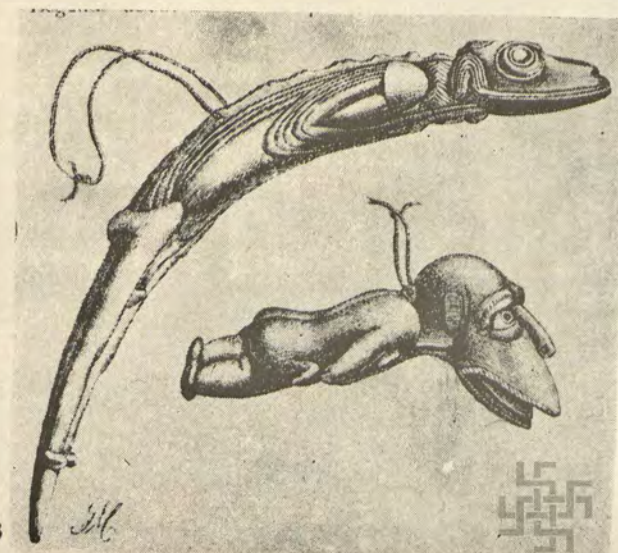
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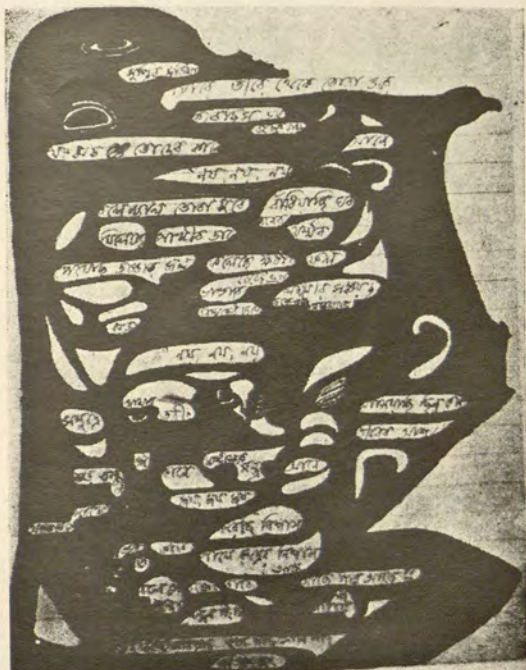


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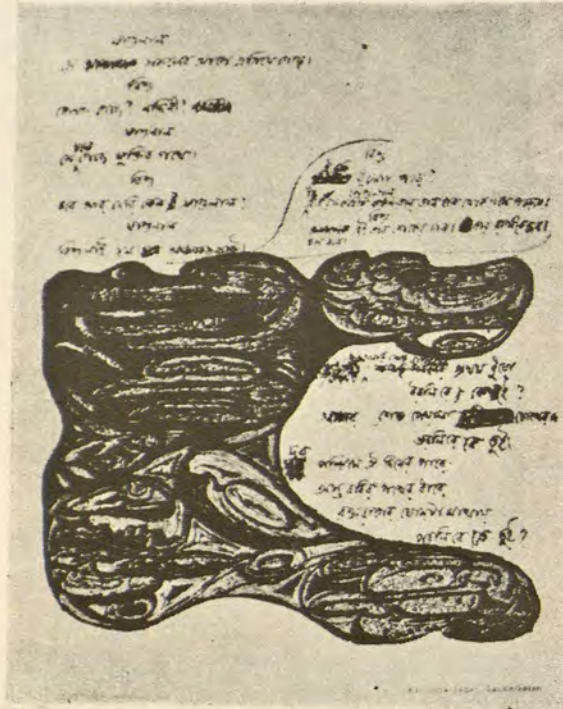


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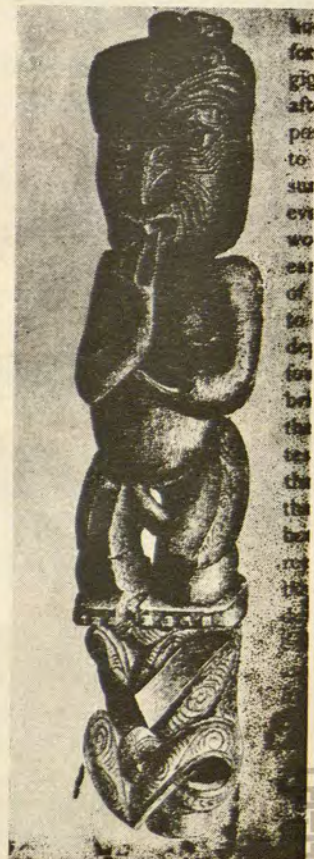
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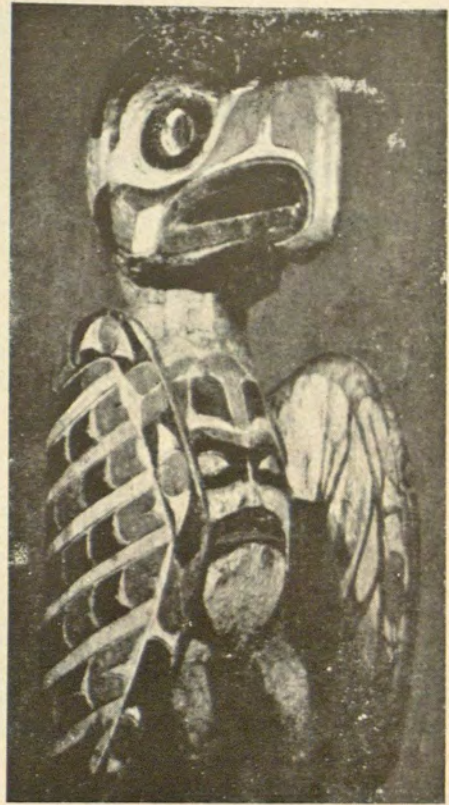
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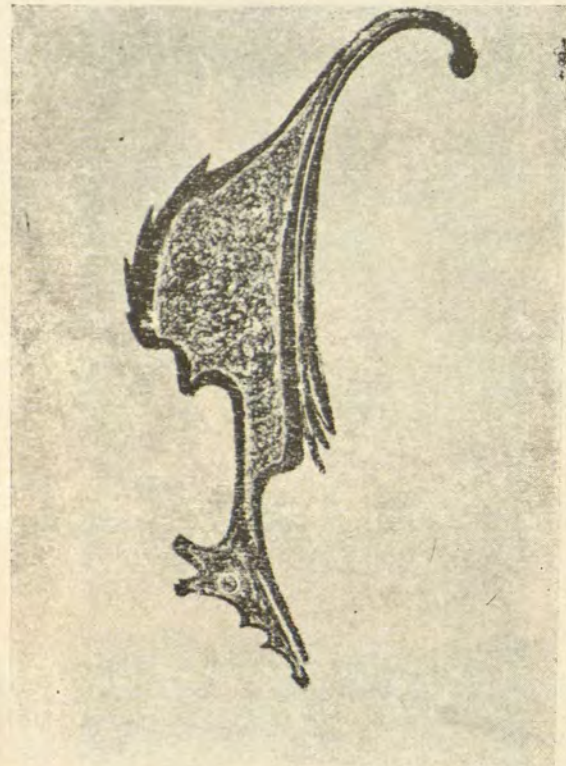
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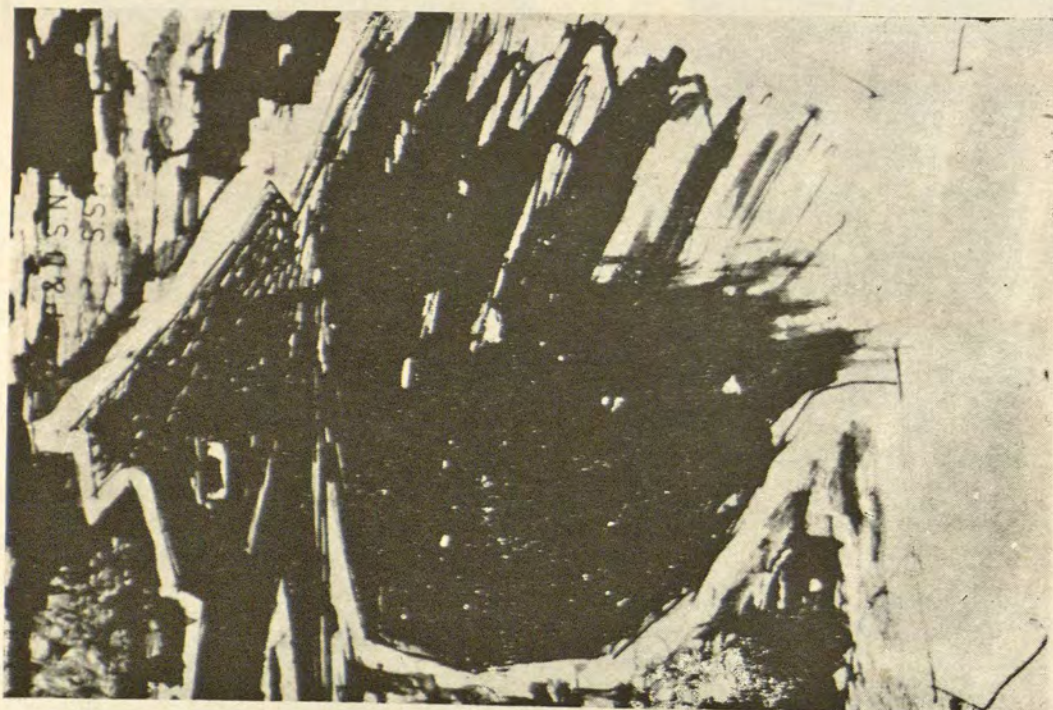




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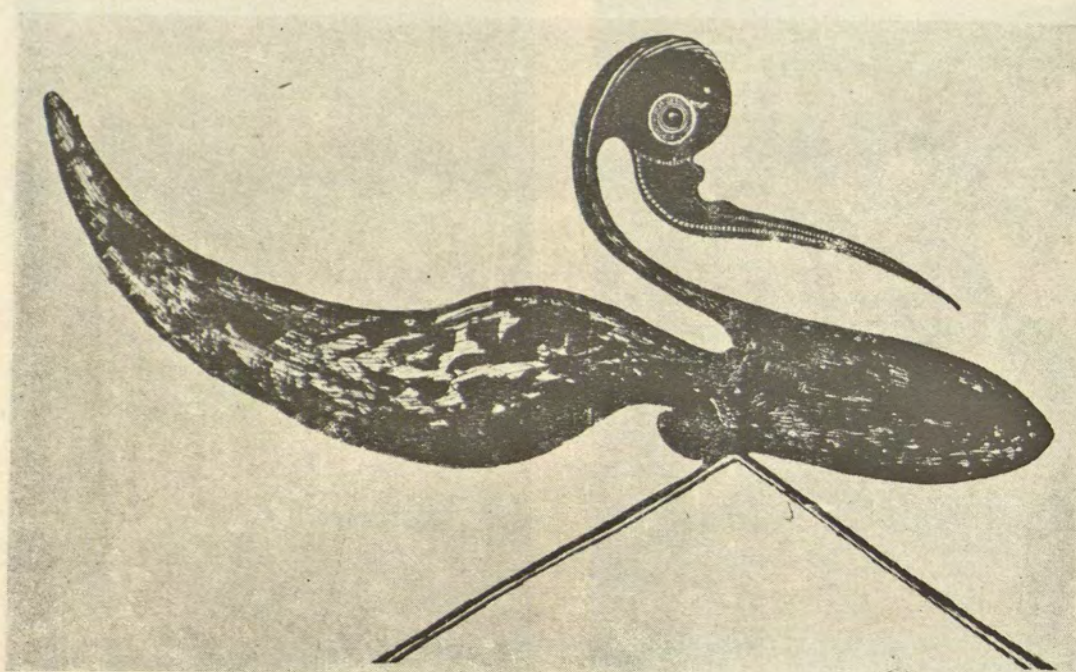


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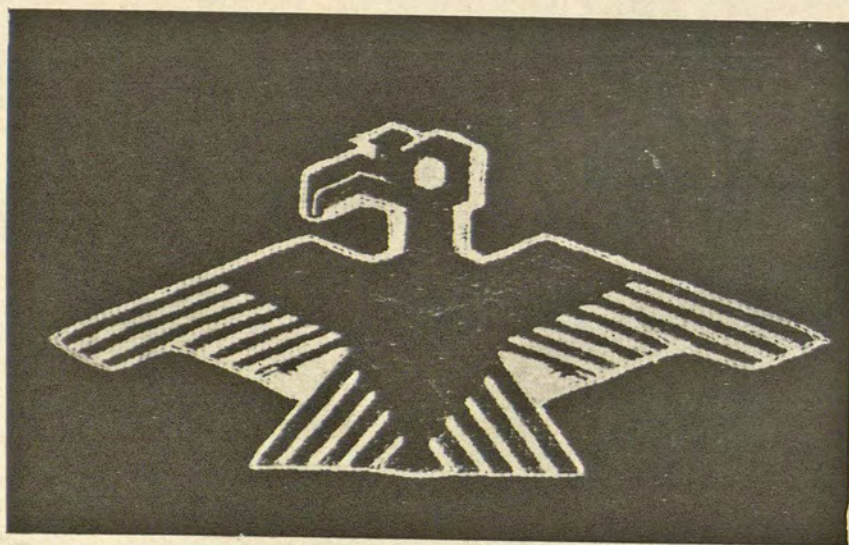






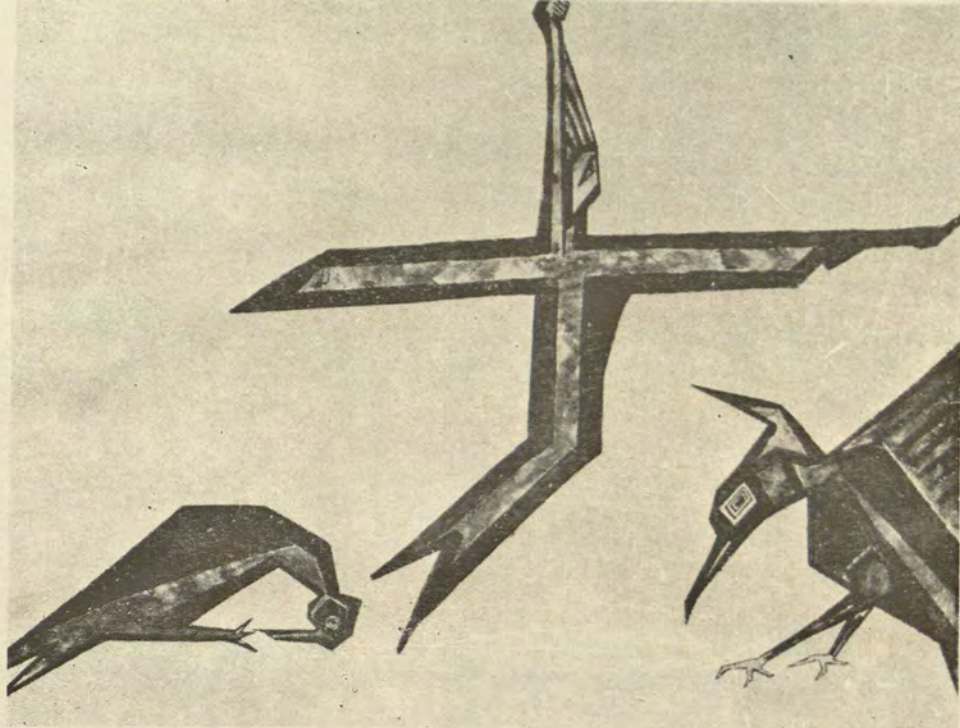
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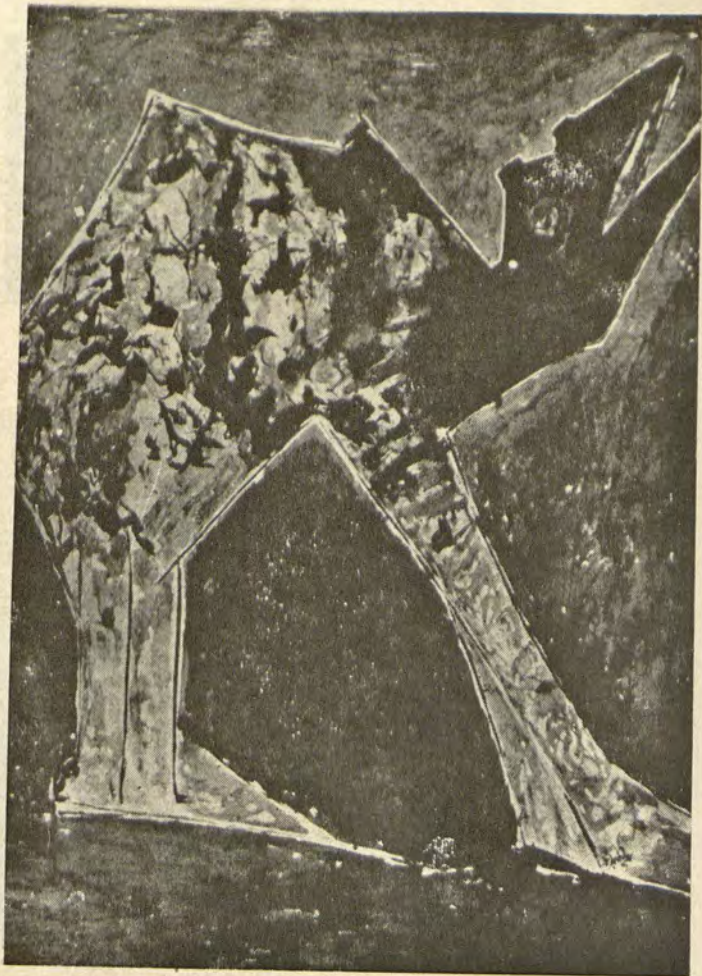


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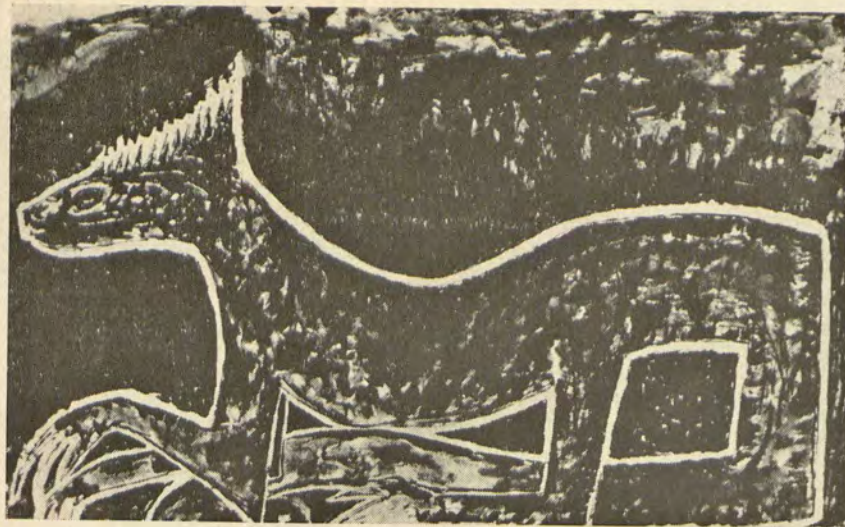


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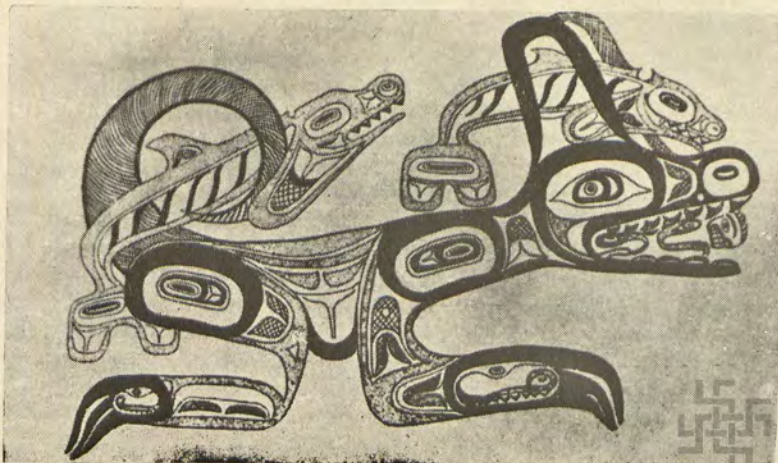


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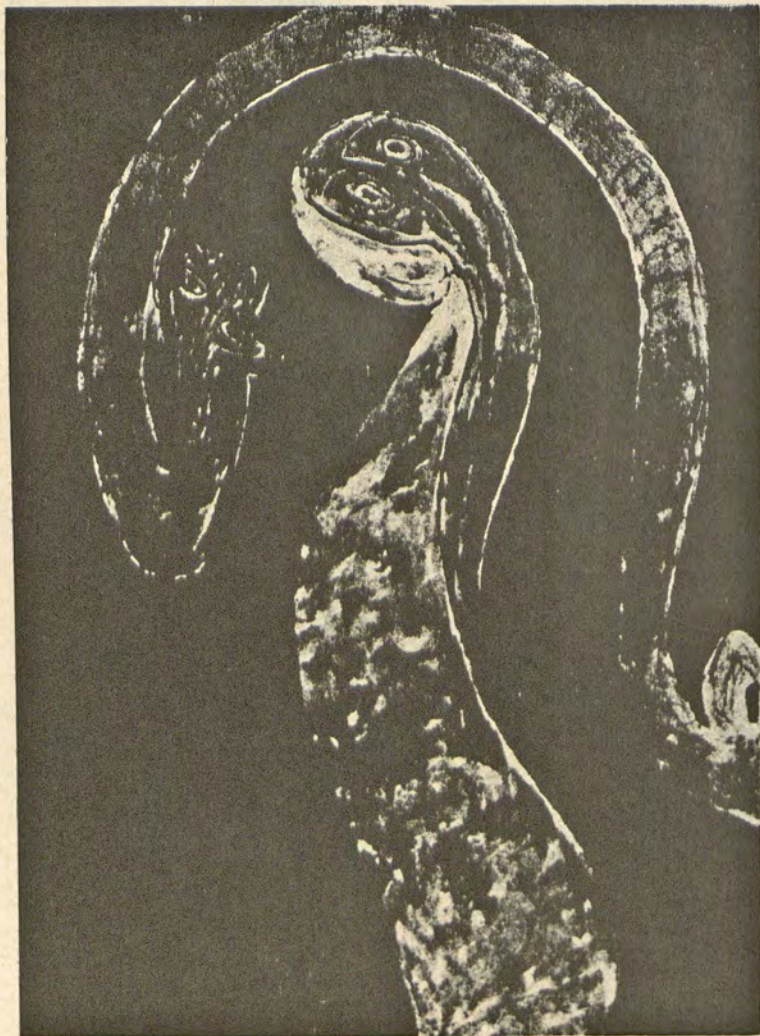


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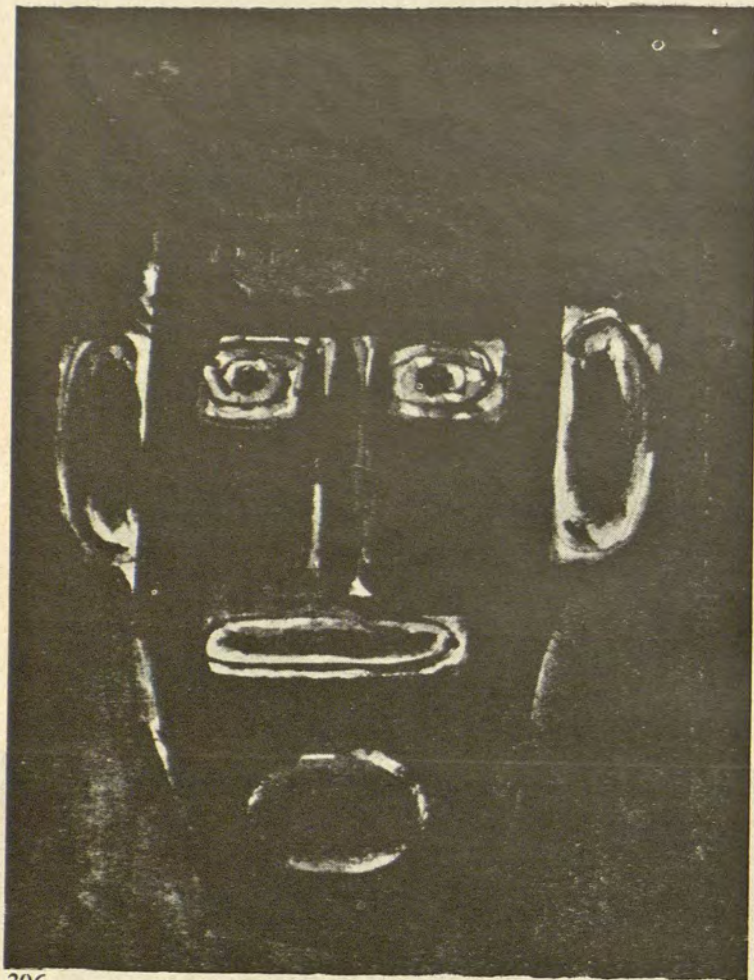


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Masks from New Ireland—one-eighth of real size. (Berlin Museum of Ethnology.)





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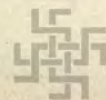
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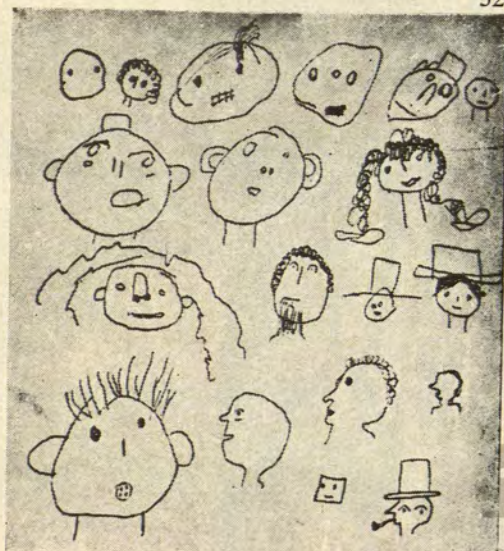


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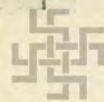
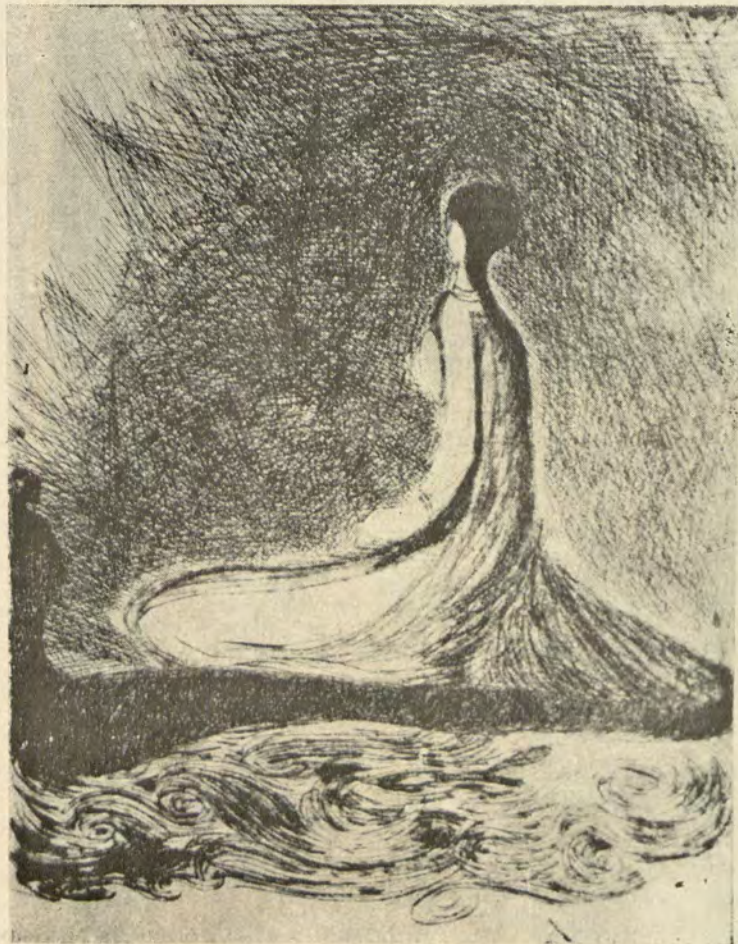




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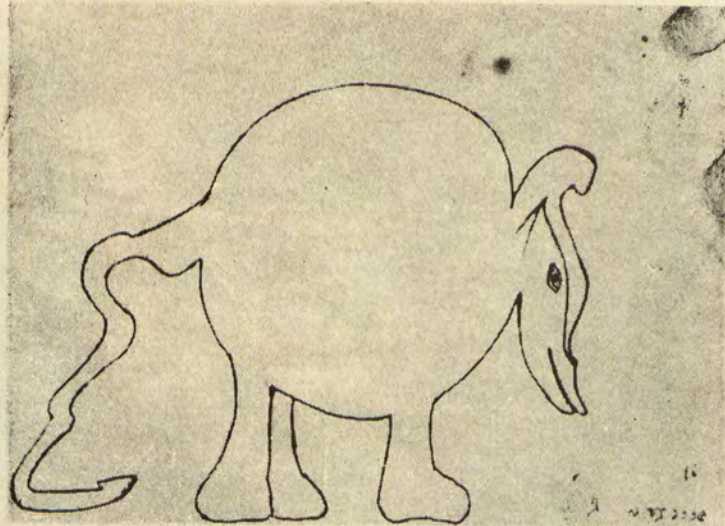
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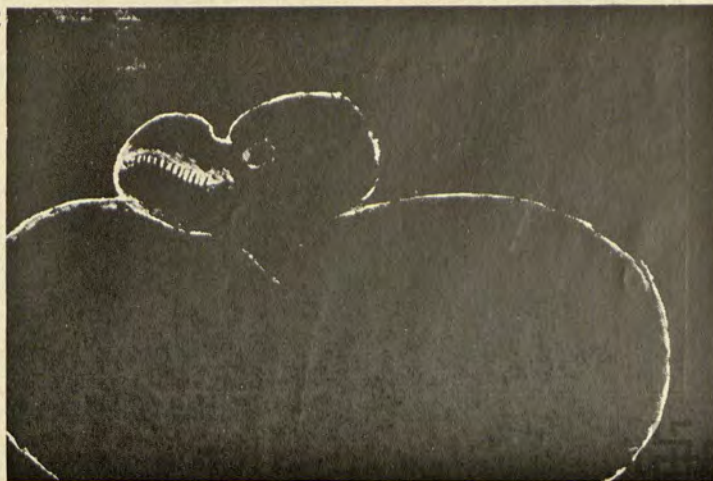


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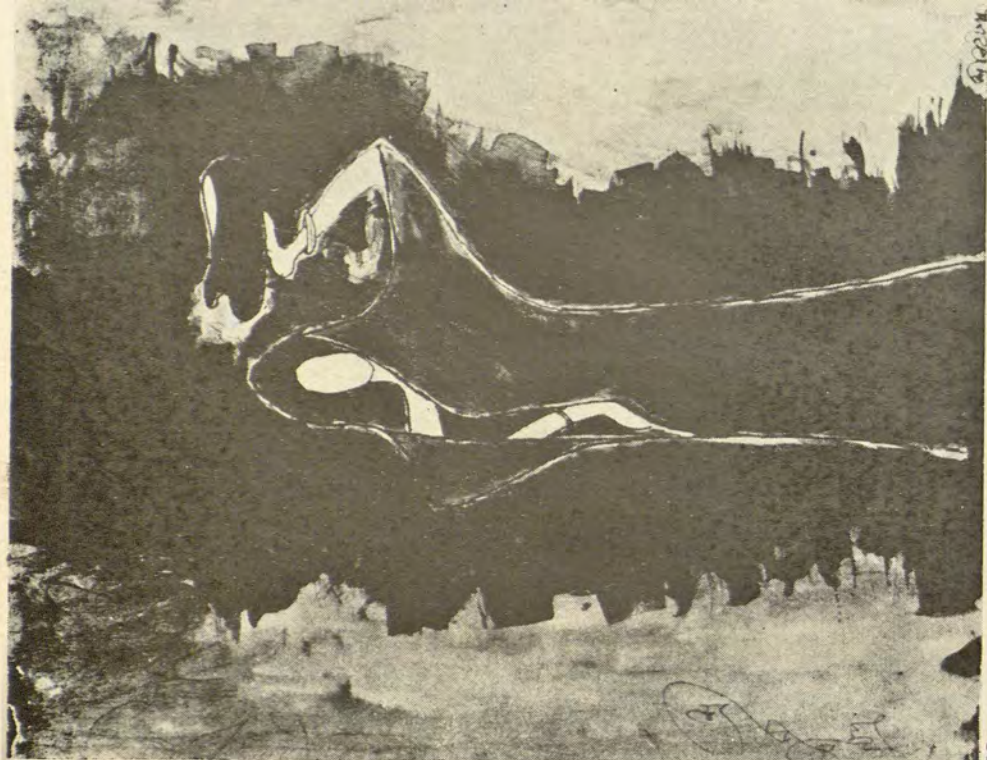
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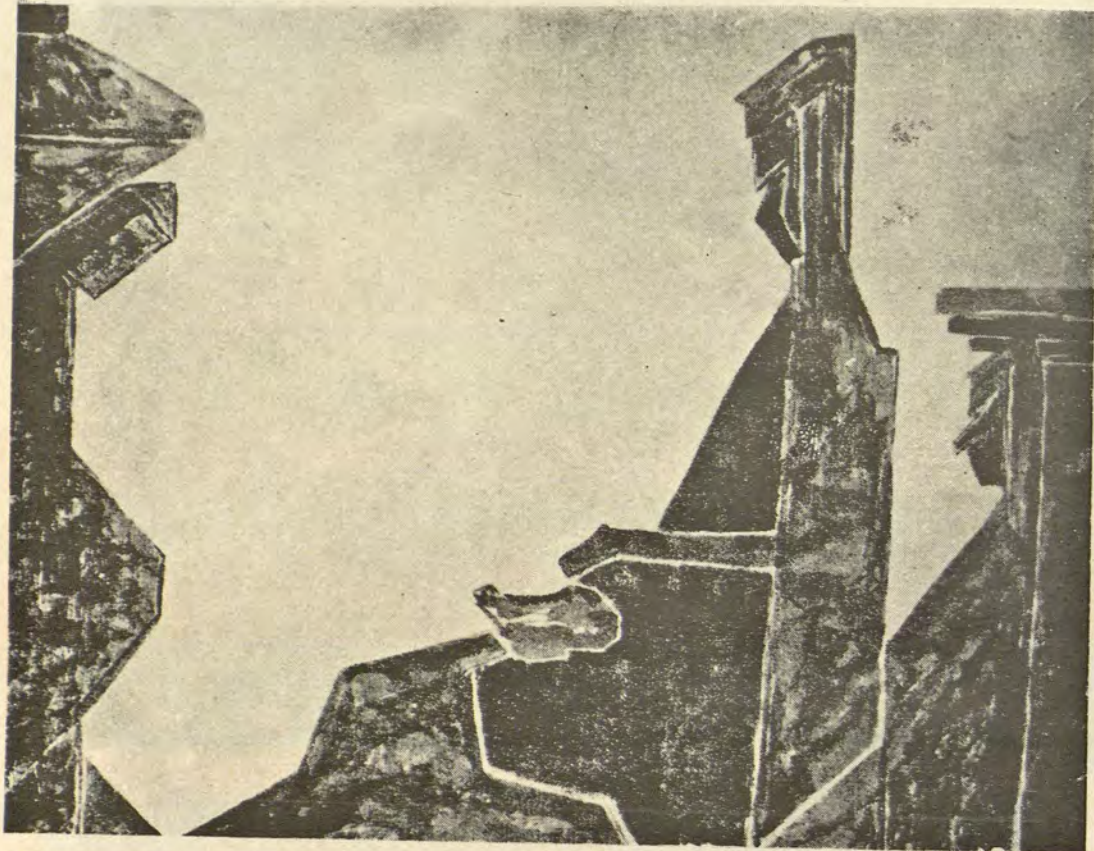


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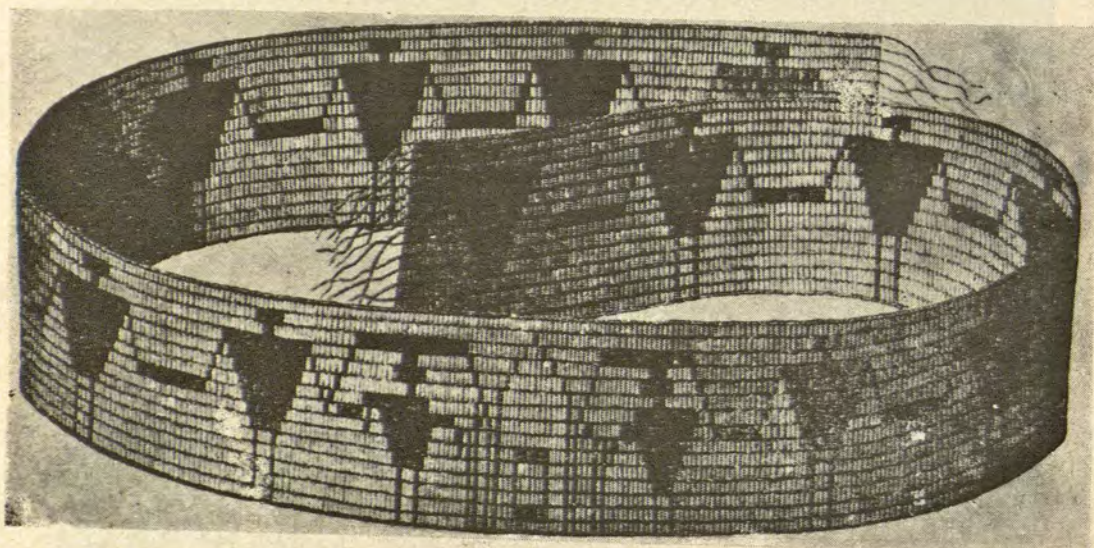




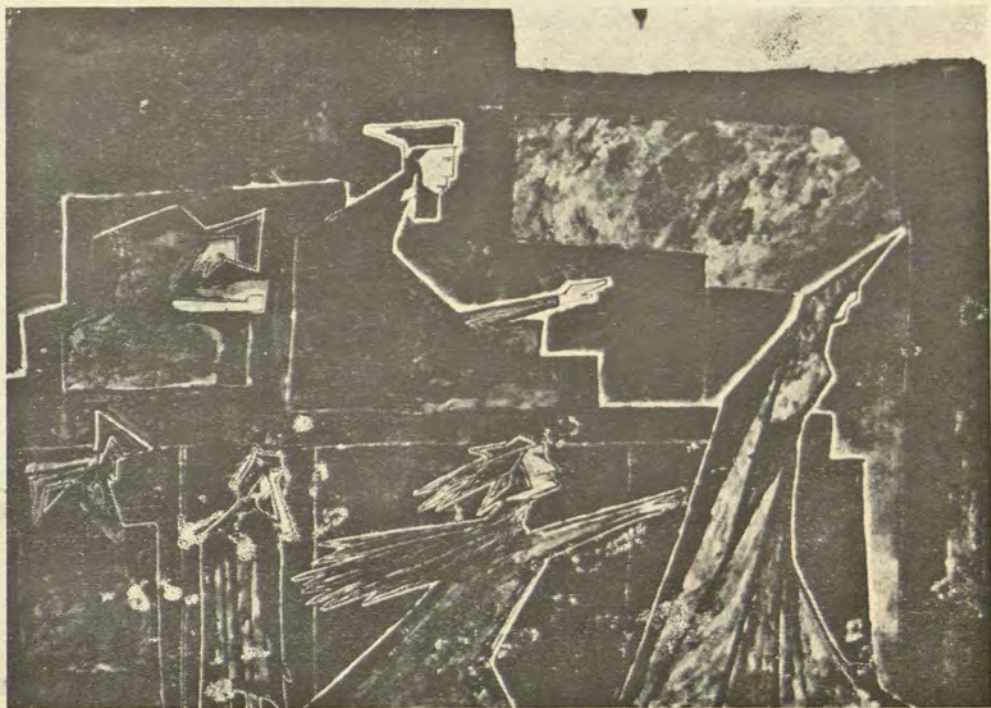


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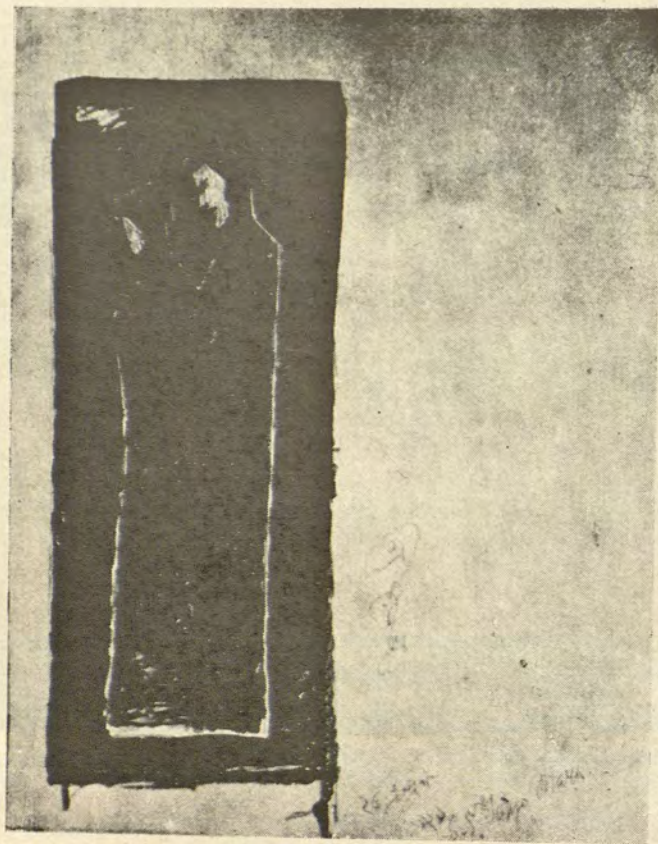
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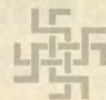




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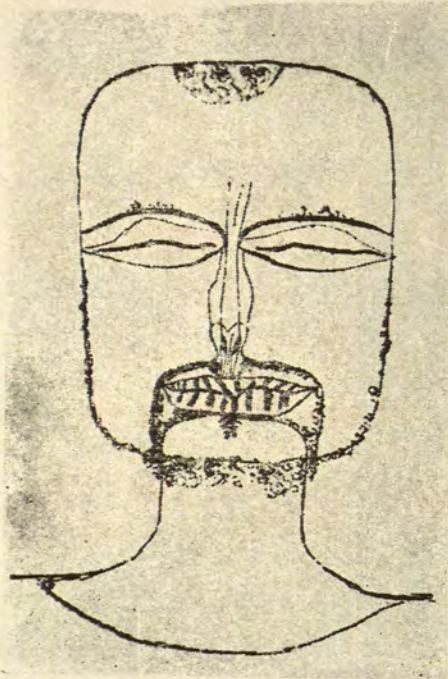




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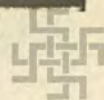






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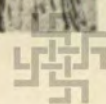


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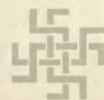




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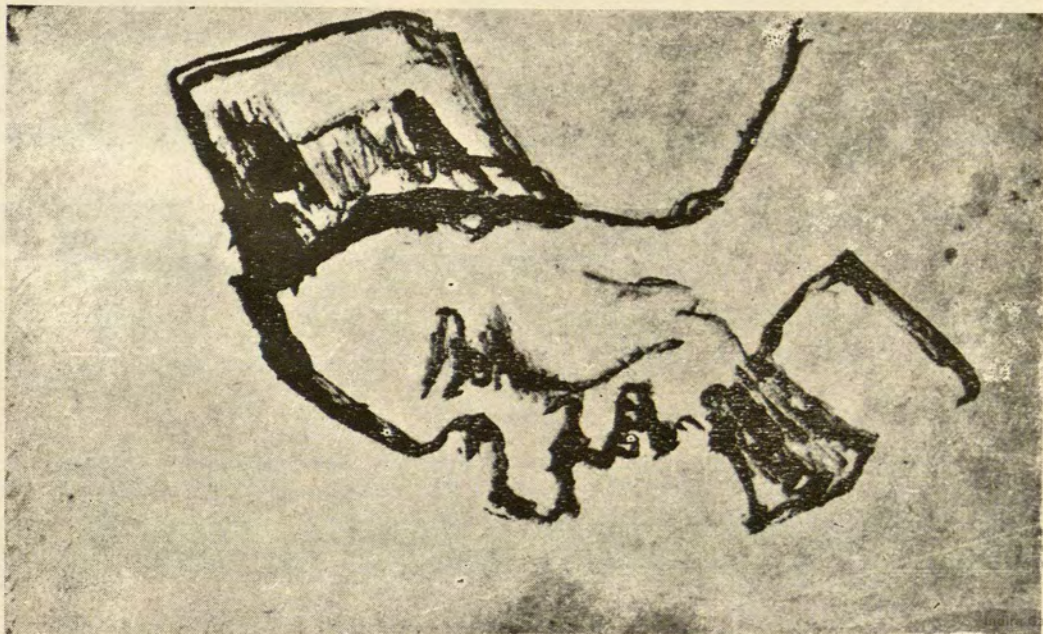




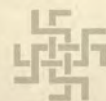
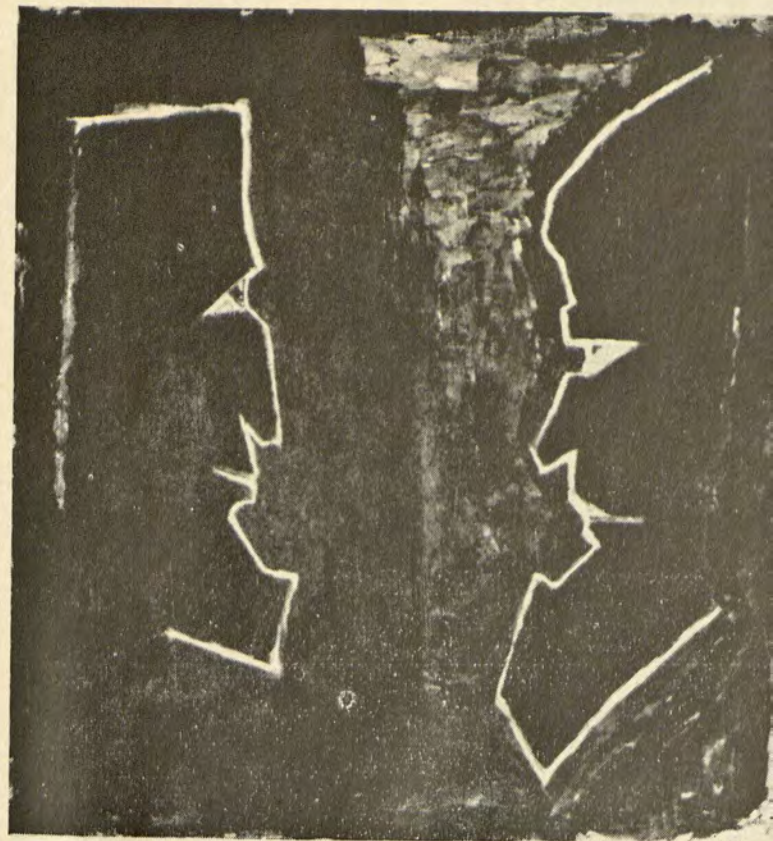
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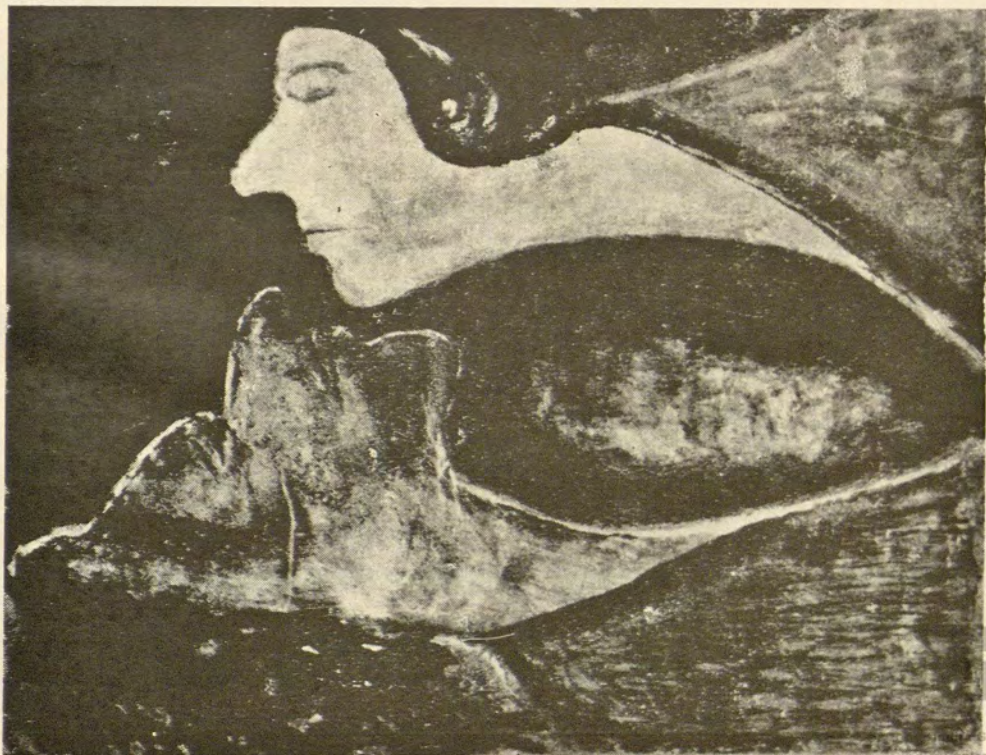








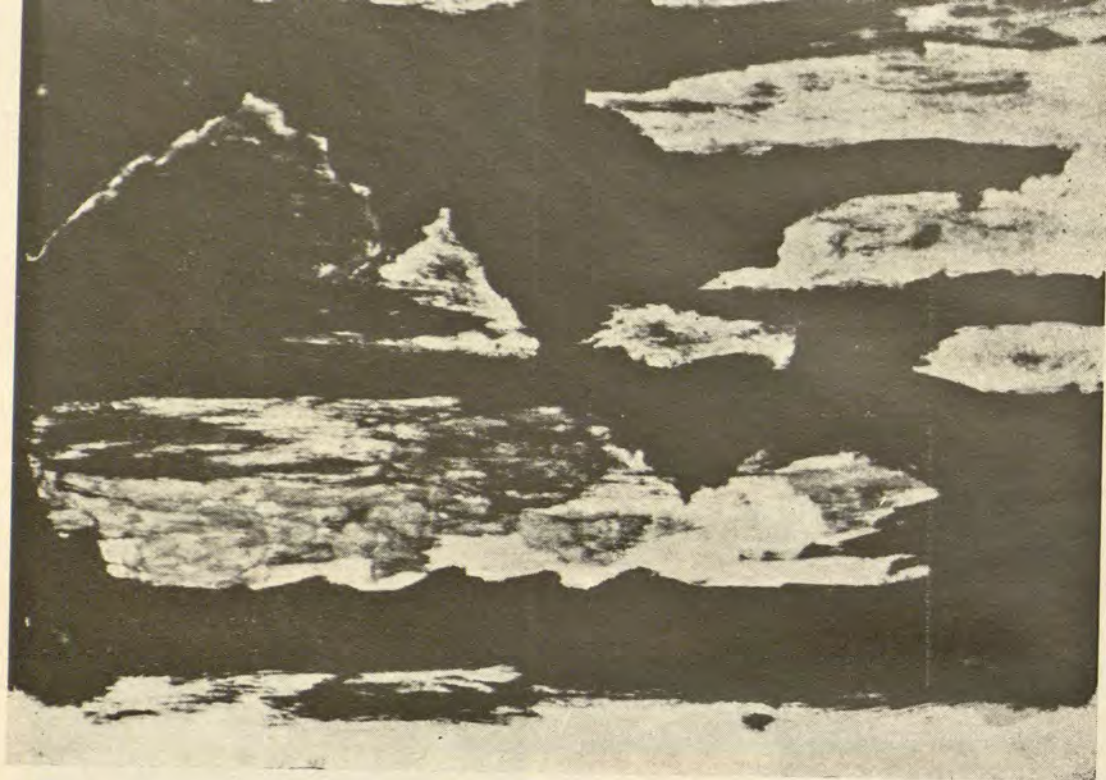
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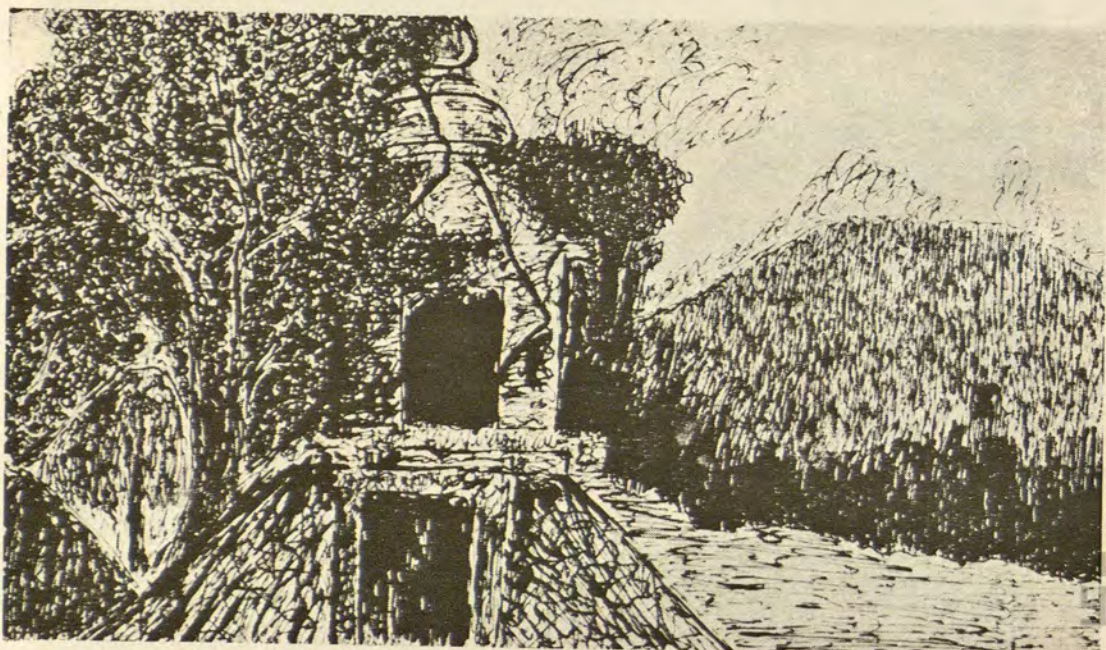






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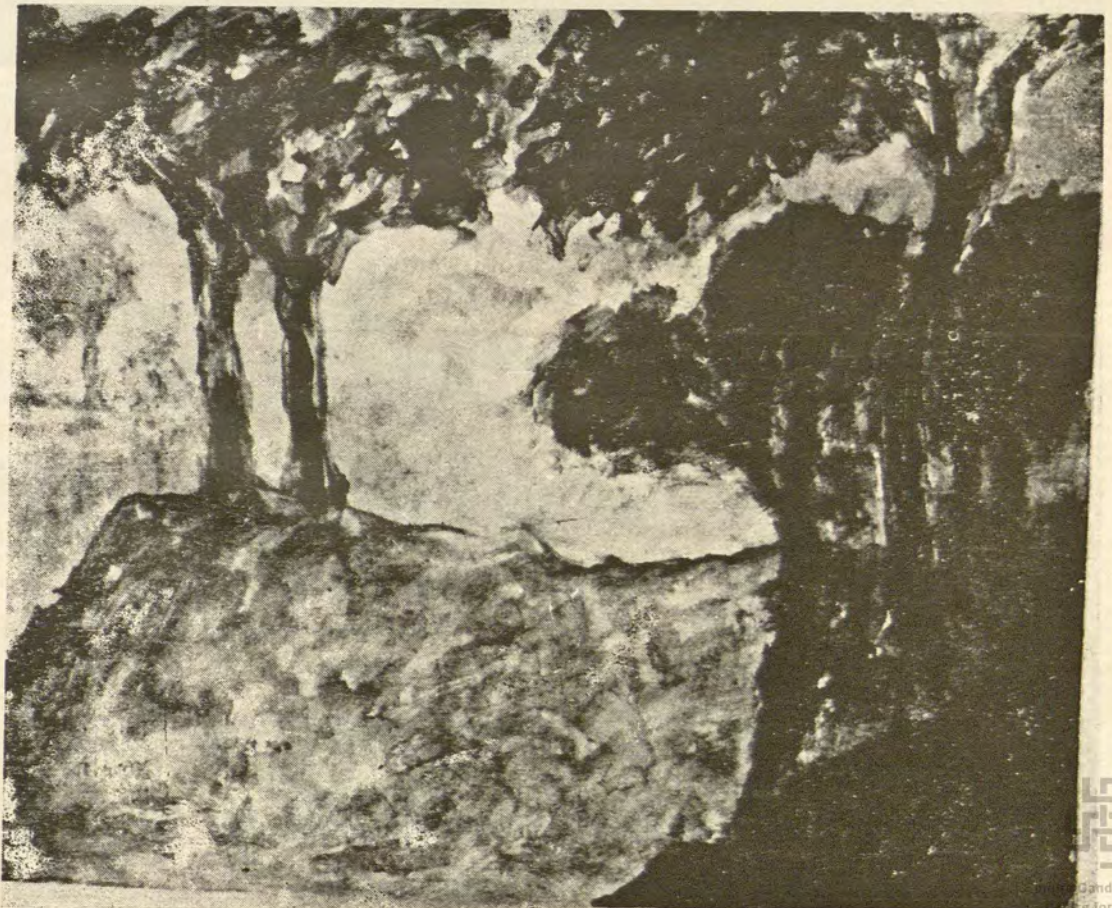






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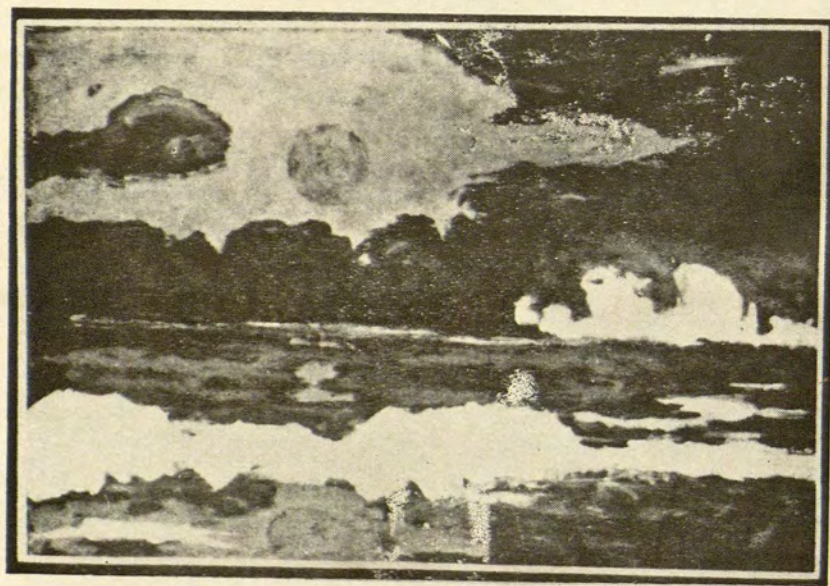






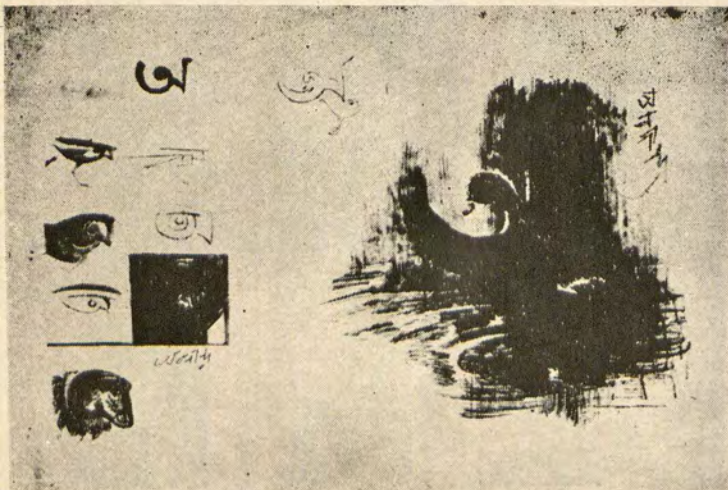
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